Marriage for Life

Come Along with Me! The Best is Yet to Be.

A compilation from gifted authors and speakers
sharing guidance for successful lifetime marriages

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Come Along with Me! The Best is Yet to Be.

"Grow old
along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of Life,
for which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
who saith, 'A whole I planned,
youth shows but half' trust God:
see all, nor be afraid!"

Robert Browning
1812-1889
English Poet and Playwright

Enjoy the read!
Sandy
11/1/21

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A Note to the Reader

Marriage for Life: Come Along with Me! The Best is Yet to Be is a compilation of marriage material from well-qualified authors, psychologists, and marriage retreat presenters that Tom and I have found helpful over the years. These speakers and authors share their training and wisdom regarding the different aspects of dating and marriage for the long term. You will notice within these pages some repetition of Scripture as the presenters speak about their specific topics. Best, sometimes repeated scriptures, only enhance the undeniable importance of each verse quoted as they relate to marriages that will withstand the boundaries of time.

All Scripture verses are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

When God led me down this road, my initial thought was to share with my grandchildren, all ten of them, what the Lord has taught my husband Tom and me thus far about relationships and marriage; and to share little bits and pieces of our personal history as he transformed us.

But as time went on, my eyes were opened to other family members and friends who might benefit from what God has to say about how to have a marriage that lasts a lifetime. And so, the thought of an actual self-published book became more of a reality in an effort to make Godly teachings available to a broader audience.

There is no intent to profit or benefit financially from this publication. Again, my hope is that this book be used as a tool to encourage every marriage, no matter how long you have been married. God can motivate a barely surviving marriage into a thriving marriage relationship where couples see each other in a new light. Real change is possible. God can do wonders if we let him.

Sandy Baker, as The Voice, presents her own personal thoughts. Though far from perfect, they reflect 55 years of marriage including some of the struggles and some of the blessings, as together, she and Tom continue their journey led by God. May he be glorified.

Dedication

My dearest and grandest of all grands: Jolin, Zachary, Noah, Brennan, Nikita, Emily, Joseph, Natasha, Daniel, and Nazareth. Whew, let me take a breath! It is most important for you to know that Grand Daddy and I have been praying for you since before the day you were born about the choice each of you will make in deciding your marriage partner.

You have been blessed with caring parents who love you with an everlasting love. Scott and Jean Ellen, Eric and Tonia, and Carlos and Angel, each have their own parenting style. But most importantly, growing up in their households have exemplified Christ's love for you. You have witnessed firsthand the example of pouring one's life out for others in need. Upon reaching adult maturity you will become what Christ has ordained for you as you draw on the values your parents have instilled in you. What a blessing for me to have been a witness to their Christian walk and talk in your personal development.

Each of you has been richly blessed by the Lord with wonderful and unique gifts. Don't waste a moment of discovery and development as you go through life. Make your journey a ride to remember. Draw upon your Creator God. Use his wisdom, his GPS. Share life with those you love and others with whom you have an opportunity to influence for God's glory.

God is love. Love is the reason we exist. My personal love for each of you grows deeper with each passing day because the reality is that our time together continues to grow shorter and shorter. Thus, it has been on my heart to share with you a few personal life experiences as well as messages from family, friends, and exceptionally gifted authors. Marriage for Life: Grow Old Along with Me! The Best is Yet to Be, is my gift to you. I pray it helps you be wise in choosing your marriage partner and that it helps you develop a strong marriage that last for life.

For those of you who choose to marry, my prayer is that within these pages, God will speak to your heart, mind, and soul regarding his design

for marriage and the covenant of love God has prepared for you. When we come together as Christians in marriage, something happens beyond ourselves. Our marriage becomes a Covenant of Love —a three-person agreement involving you, your spouse, and your Heavenly Father.

God's Word in Ecclesiastes says, "A cord of three strands is not easily broken." I pray that you will trust in the strength God has given you. Trust in his Word. Trust in his love for you.

I love you so much,

Mama Nan

Acknowledgements

To begin to thank those who have made this book possible is an overwhelming task. I am certainly not a writer but I felt led to create *Marriage for Life* to offer Biblical direction to young people curious about dating and marriage, and to offer married couples truths that will strengthen their commitment to one another. My husband, Tom, and I are still on the road to discovery after 55 years of marriage, having begun as skating partners during our teen years.

Thank you to my daughter, friend, and prayer warrior Tonia who has been a strong arm to lean on as she encouraged me throughout the process and formulation of this work. Once in a while we steal away for breakfast and before you know it, we are talking about how to make *Marriage for Life* a better read. Her literary skills have been a tremendous help.

My husband Tom has been a powerful supporter as well. He has exhibited patience in helping with my computer mishaps; and there were many. He shows up like Super Man to save the day! He never gives up. Also, his Biblical knowledge has been a tremendous help in searching for just the perfect Scripture verses where needed. Where would I be without you, sweetie? Thank you so much.

The cover artwork was done by Michael Akrong, a friend from church, who has been supportive and patient as I changed my mind several times until, together, we came up with the perfect rendition of two "old people" who still love one another. Thank you for sharing your artistic talents, Michael.

The back-cover page was done by our grandson, Zachary, who is a very creative photographer and an upcoming video artist. Zach, thank you for capturing just the right look and for sharing your God-given gifts with Grand Daddy and me.

Much of the material you will see here comes from years of attending marriage retreats and seminars in various states. Heavy notes were taken so recall would be easier. Thank you to the presenters for your unshakable wisdom and knowledge regarding what God's Word has to say about Biblical marriages.

A thank you to my friend Emily and her husband Terry who have waded through tons of editing corrections to help me come up with something presentable. Again, I am not a writer, but Emily is, so thank you both,

Emily and Terry. I had no idea what I was getting you into when the commitment was made. What an overwhelming display of Godly service to another in need!

Most importantly, thank you, Lord! You are the one who laid this idea on my heart. My desire is to reach our family and friends as well as those unaware of what a Biblical marriage looks like. I pray that God be glorified through this writing and that you will be made known as Savior among the readers.

Introduction

The Lord has been faithful and patient in the process of maturing Tom and me into the couple he had marked out well in advance of this writing. I had no idea that the Lord would use us to promote his design for marriage, yet he has given us opportunities to speak on his behalf as he moved us around the world. *Marriage for Life: Grow Old Along with Me! The Best is Yet to Be,* is a product of my desire to share what has been learned not only from our experiences but also from gifted authors and presenters about promoting good, strong marriages for the duration of our lives on earth.

This book does not read like a novel, but a thought-provoking book to be marked through as if it were a road map taking you into uncharted territory. No matter where you are in your marriage journey, God has more to teach you about marriage, yourself, and your spouse. God is not finished yet. Trust him! Each of us can learn and practice how to enjoy a lifetime marriage if we are willing to do the work. My prayer is that you will invest prayer, time, and energy as you prepare for in this trip.

The beginning pages are written for today's teens and young adults, to help understand that when the sparks start flying and the heart throbs begin, it is time to step back and look deeper into this relationship, our emotions, and our behaviors. Love is a decision and a commitment. Emotions just come and go.

With the divorce rate what it is today, along with the fact that many are choosing to disregard marriage all together, obviously, there is a void when it comes to living harmoniously as one. The blessings God offers in a committed Christian marriage fall by the wayside. The boundaries in relationships whether dating or married are given to us for the protection God knows we need.

Within this read, we will be talking about boundaries among the not yet married as well as those already committed to marriage. Because we all have an inbred sinful nature desirous of self-rule. We need to resist the thought that we might be smarter than God. Remember that in all, even marriage, he created us and knows us better than we know ourselves.

As children, what we know about marriage develops from our home environment as we grow into adulthood. Some children live in nurturing, loving, two-parent households where commitment and healthy ways of

communicating and handling conflicts are modeled, but not every child lives in a positive family setting. Our tendency is to repeat what is modeled in our homes. Without even knowing it, unhealthy patterns of living can be passed down from generation to generation.

The purpose of this book, *Marriage for Life,* is to declare the Lord and his view of Biblical marriage to the next generation Within these pages we will learn how to nurture one another in a way that builds stronger trust, not only between spouses, but also carries over to our children as well.

"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare the Lord to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God? Though you have made me see troubles . . . you will restore my life again . . . you will again bring me up . . . and comfort me once more" (Psalm 71:18-21).

God is the one who opens our hearts to look within developing a healthy, wholesome marriage. Personal humility is the key in the process of change. Hopefully, there will be many eye-opening moments as you travel this road of discovering more about yourselves and Christian marriages.

Lastly, we pray you learn the meaning of being forgiven by the Savior, Jesus Christ. "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15).

So, start packing, we are going on a road trip for as long as we "both shall live!"

For lack of guidance a nation falls,
but victory is won through
many advisers.

Proverbs 11:14

1

Before you Say, "I Do!"

The Voice

Remember whenever you see the script, "The Voice," I, Sandy, am sharing directly my thoughts and words.

The articles in Chapter One are for those who are not yet married but are interested in dating. This chapter will help you understand more about the opposite sex, the purpose of dating, and help you navigate your dating experience.

I jokingly tell people to walk slowly and carry a big stick! It is very exciting when someone shows interest in you. It is easy to forget that you have a choice to accept, reject, or say "maybe later." This feeling of attraction will not be the last time you either are shown interest or will be curious about someone of the opposite sex. Meeting socially in small groups is a great way to get to know people's personalities without the pressure of one-on-one dating.

Take the time to get to know the real person. Observe how they treat you when you are alone and when you are with others. Become acquainted with their special talents and interests. After you take the time to know someone personally, you will find that physical attractiveness is a small piece in the overall makeup of an individual. Test your comfort level around them. How they respect their family members and others will have a huge impact on how they respect you over time.

The most important step when starting to date is to pray about your relationship and trust in the Lord. He knew you firsthand. "My frame

was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:15-16). God has a plan already marked out for you. Follow his lead.

The first presenter in this book is Dr. Ronald Sauer whom Tom and I had the pleasure of meeting during a marriage retreat quite a while ago. After Dr. Sauer was introduced, he wanted us to meet his wife. What struck me profoundly, was the introduction he gave her. He went to great lengths to tell us of her fine qualities; complementing her long before he actually got around to asking her to stand and be recognized. Dr. Sauer is someone who practices what he preaches! He truly honors his wife.

You will also read the works of Tommy Nelson with whom we became familiar way back in the 1970's when he was just getting started. Nelson's writings about God's view of marital relationships really caught my attention and helped to clarify some misconceptions in my own mind. Hopefully it will benefit you.

Enjoy fully what they have to say about the dating process before moving on to thoughts of marriage which will be discussed later.

Staying the Course as a Gentleman: Dating with Purpose

Ronald Sauer, PhD.

Ron and Sue Sauer are best known for their "Sweet and Sour" ministry. They feel that Biblical Marriage Training is truth expressed in love. We depend on God's Word to supply this truth. When we are hurting in our marriages, we can diminish the self-inflicted pain and suffering when we follow his divine plan. We will see Dr. Sauer again within these pages.

The typical woman does not want to date and marry a caveman; therefore, it is essential to be a gentleman to win a woman's heart. No man can possibly have a happy romantic relationship without being a gentleman; it is a matter of 1-3-6.

1. First, a man must be a gentleman to win a girl's heart.

2. It is three times more essential to remain a gentleman after winning her heart.

3. It is six times more necessary to progress as a gentleman after marrying her.

Marriage has benefits, but it also has its frustrations and challenges.

Consequently, the man must remain a gentleman to maintain and deepen the woman's respect of him. Whenever she begins to lose respect for him, the relationship is headed downward and will be lost if immediate change does not occur.

Maintain a proper attitude.
She is bone of your bones. Everything begins here. The correct disposition of the man views the lady as a daughter of God. As such, she is special.

> "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman' for she was taken out of the man" (Genesis 2:22-23).

Be courteous.
This is essential! No man will ever have a happy romantic relationship unless he grows in courtesy to the woman in his life. A woman does not want to date or marry a rude barbarian or caveman.

> "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

Be sensitive to her.
Remember that the woman is the "weaker vessel." That is, she is not as physically strong as you are, and she is more emotionally sensitive. Being more emotionally sensitive means that she can more readily identify and sympathize with a suffering person (which is a gift), but she can also be hurt more quickly and wounded more deeply.

> "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7).

Use proper words.
Be careful in what you say. She is verbally oriented and very affected by what the man says. Often a man's words run ahead of the relationship, in saying things that he really doesn't mean.

> "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

Exhibit self-control.
When she disappoints or irritates you, get a grip—don't lash out. Maintain your composure, remain a gentleman and stay calm.

> "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

Speak well of her.
Both in private and in public, verbally honor her when speaking to others, whether she is present or not.

> "A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30b).

Affirm her.
Periodically express appreciation for her fine qualities, virtues, devotion to Christ, for her compassion for others, her appearance, etc. Keep your focus on the positive.

> "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her" (Proverbs 31:28).

Assist her to become a better person.
Half of your duty is to keep a young lady special. The other half of your duty is to, with divine help, assist her to become even finer. Then if you marry her, look what an incredible wife you have; a Proverbs 31 spouse! This is precisely the kind of spouse you will need to weather the storms of life.

> "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

Be patient with her.
Learn to enjoy waiting for her as she gets dressed for a date, spends time with her girlfriends, and let her finish what she has to say, etc. Men like to get to the point with few words, but impatient communication is one of the key downfalls in relationships.

> "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

Behave properly.
Constant caution must be exercised with your hands. There must be no improper touching. Unless married to her, she is not yours to touch sexually. Do not once take advantage of her, even once.

> "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

Guard her purity.
It is said of Jesus' stepfather Joseph that he kept his mother a virgin until marriage. Let's follow his noble example and let's strengthen the woman's moral convictions and enhance her purity. Revelation compares your spouse to the Bride of Christ.

> "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son" (Matthew 1:24-25).

Realize your relationship is an open book.
Other people will be watching, learning, and being influenced by what they see in you because character is the most valuable part of our lives.

> "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12).

Be responsible, a proactive leader and provider.
Take the initiative to live responsibly. Marriage is for responsible adults. A husband should discuss with his wife the decisions in their relationship that need to be made. Valuing her input, the husband should want her help in making decisions, and he should willingly take the responsibility before God for the decisions made.

> "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Trust in the Lord. Trust his wisdom.

> "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you and watch over you . . . the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him" (Psalm 32:8-10).

Seek his counsel daily and the wise counsel of mature mentors regularly.

Sauer, Ronald, PhD., Bible Professor, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. Oral Presentation

Staying the Course as a Lady: Dating with Purpose

Ronald Sauer, PhD.

Ron and Sue Sauer are best known for their "Sweet and Sour" ministry. They feel that Biblical Marriage Training is truth expressed in love. We depend on God's Word to supply this truth. When we are hurting in our marriages, we can diminish the self-inflicted pain and suffering when we follow his divine plan. We will see Dr. Sauer again within these pages.

Be God-fearing. Everything begins here.
A lady's respect for and fear of God shapes her character, molds her conduct, and guides her relations with others.

> "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

Be devoted to Christ.
What attracts a man to a woman more than all else is her being completely given over to Christ. He realizes that she, having Christ, does not need him.

> "And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:25b-26).

Maintain high moral standards.
A woman's fear of God leads her to live as heaven prescribes. She adopts the lofty moral standard erected in Scripture and refuses to deviate from it.

> "I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me" (Psalm 119:102).

Be modestly dressed.
Quite a bit can be discerned about a woman by her manner of dress. An immodestly dressed female certainly attracts men, but the wrong kind of men. A Christian man definitely notices a woman who appropriately covers herself, and he highly respects her.

> "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Be a model of inner beauty.
A woman's external beauty lasts only about 20-25 years, and then begins to fade, however, her real beauty is inward and moral in nature. Such moral virtues grow and flourish as she matures, so that she becomes a finer person while growing older. As a result, her husband's esteem, and appreciation of her increases as his appreciation of her inner beauty increases.

> "She is clothed with strength and dignity" (Proverbs 31:25).

Maintain feminine reserve.
A prudent lady conveys to a man that she is not immoral and that she cannot get into a relationship with him, without divine consent. God made men hunters. As a result, men are aggressive and want to take the initiative in pursuing. A wise woman knows this. Men are turned off by aggressive females; however, if a woman's heart belongs to the Lord, God will give it to the man of his choice.

> "Make no provisions for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14 NKJV).

The Voice

I am reminded of the song by Casting Crowns. The lyrics say: "It's a slow fade when you give yourself away. It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray, thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid, when you give yourself away. People never crumble in a day. The journey from your mind to your hands is shorter than you're thinking. Be careful if you think you stand; you just might be sinking."

This song reminds me just how much we need God's hand of protection around and about us and how enticing Satan's pulls and tugs can be. Wait for marriage because the reward is great. Keep your wedding day in mind. I can tell you that there is nothing to compare with giving ourselves freely after the marriage celebration. Scripture tells us: "They were naked and felt no shame." Wait for marriage because there is absolutely nothing to compare to that feeling of oneness.

Be a helper or help mate.
A woman's chief responsibility in a relationship with a man is to be his helper—assist him in walking with and serving the Lord. Without her input, he will have a difficult, if not impossible, time becoming the man heaven wants him to be. A woman should be a steppingstone for a man, not a stumbling block. She is a Proverbs 31 wife.

> "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life . . . She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness" (Proverbs 31:12,27).

Be concerned for the needy.
Although her husband and children are her primary concerns, she is not too busy to assist others in need. Compassionate works are a part of her DNA.

> "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy" (Proverbs 31:20).

Be respectful of others.
Recognizing the image of God in others, the lady holds others in proper esteem.

> "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the King" (1 Peter 2:17).

> "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbandsas to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:21-22).

Be trustworthy, imparting Godly wisdom.
Others can safely confide in her, pouring out their heart seeking her counsel. She offers sound advice to help guide others in their affairs, trials, opportunities, relationships, etc. If married, her husband is certain that she will do him good and not evil.

"Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value . . . She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:11,26).

Sauer, Ronald PhD., Bible Professor, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. Oral Presentation

Tips for Successful Dating

Tommy Nelson

Pastor Tommy Nelson taught his first sermon series on the Song of Solomon in 1991. Since that day Tommy has become known as the "marriage pastor" and has gone on to teach time and time again on the subject. He states: "In a day when the institution of marriage is in jeopardy because of a lack of understanding on the topic, people want to know what the Bible has to say about marriage, love, and sex." He will reappear several times in this book.

In our culture we too often become consumed with the heady emotion called romance, and very quickly after marriage, we find that the romance evaporates to reveal two very flawed persons in a difficult world. When we discover that the bright and happy romance has evolved into the drudgery of daily living, and much to our dismay, we discover that our spouses have a shortage of character and virtue, we become discouraged and deeply frustrated. As a result, we may become divorced before the ink on the marriage license has dried. We are a nation of people quick to fall into romance, and then later, quick to bail out of commitment. What is wrong? For many, unfortunately, romance is based on physical attraction.

Tier One: The Physical Attraction (Outward).
Physical attraction goes beyond sight; it encompasses all the senses: a person's voice and laughter, fragrance and cleanliness, and touch or closeness. Here is the real key to Godly attraction. The woman should be attracted to the man physically and spiritually.

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out" (Song of Songs 1:1-3).

Tier Two: Character and Spirituality Attraction (Inward).
The second tier of attraction, much more important than the physical, is based on inner qualities—character and one's spiritual relationship with God. In physical attraction, all the magnets draw us to another person externally, readily perceived on the outside. We do not have to think about the physical. We are automatically drawn to the person. Our response is based largely on intuition and feeling.

In character attraction, however, what draws us to another person is rooted deep on the inside. These signs are more difficult to read and understand because we may not automatically feel quickly drawn emotionally to a person of good character. Tier-two attraction requires spiritual discernment and objectivity on our part.

How to Discern Good Character

Behavior in Stressful Conditions.
The best way to discern character is to observe what happens to that person when "pressed." What type of behavior do they manifest when things are not going well, when times are tough, when deadlines are looming, when cash is in short supply, when disappointed, broken, desperate, hurt, or rejected?

Reputation with Others.
What kind of reputation does the person to whom you are attracted have with other Christians, both same gender and of the opposite gender? Would you love to bring this person home to meet your family—parents, grands, uncles, etc.? Are you aware that if you date the type of person you wouldn't marry, you are creating your own reputation so that the type of person you would marry may not give you a second look? You should always be able to say, "I am proud to have been seen with, to have dated, or to have gone steady with that person in my past."

Obedient to Authority.
The desire and attraction that you feel for another person should possess this characteristic: the person must be obedient to authority. Each of us is under some type of authority. God has a chain of command in effect, and we are required to be obedient to those in authority as unto the Lord. Much has been said in our world today against submission, but submission is a theme throughout the Bible.

Three Things Required for Successful Dating

The First is Time.
Dating requires that couples spend time together to get to know each other—brief, frequent encounters over a prolonged period. Those dating should avoid

concentrations of time, such as entire days spent together, when they first begin dating. Dating requires time for having long, meandering conversations and for participating in public activities together, and in the process, getting to know each other better in a wide variety of settings and circumstances.

Dating couples should spend enough time together to see each other in group interaction and in stressful, even crisis situations. Before any commitments are made, a couple should spend time together in the presence of both families, and spend time together doing real life daily chores and duties.

The Second is a "No Strings Attached" Policy.
Dating should not be obligatory in any sense of the word. Couples can go on double or group dates. Men and women will gain valuable information about how a date responds to them, how a date responds to other people, and how a date evaluates the behavior of others. It is wiser to date in public places. If you begin to date exclusively, you have moved into dating steadily.

> "Make no provisions for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts"
> (Romans 13:14 NKJV).

The Voice

Young people these days are pretty savvy and certainly understand that during the teen years hormones run wild if left unchecked. It is important to put physical/sexual boundaries in place before you begin dating. And then once dating, discuss what those boundaries are and hold fast to them. Setting boundaries shows that you respect yourself and your date. Maintaining sexual purity will require discipline and allow the strength of your character to shine. Men and women must do their part to protect one another from temptation. It is a known fact that men are visual so women should do their part to dress in a way that does not make her a tease. And men will do well to focus on the woman's finer character qualities.

The Third is Respect.
A third hallmark of any dating relationship should be respect. Respect and romance are first cousins. A woman who feels that a man respects her automatically feels that a man is being more romantic toward her. Men, if you really want to win the affection of a woman you are dating, show her respect. Express how much you like being with her. To "like" is a critical

prerequisite to love. If you do not show respect to a woman, she will never believe that you truly like and admire her.

The Voice

Many may think it is old fashioned to hold the car door open for a lady or to walk up to the door of her house to pick her up and take her home rather than just honk from your car (or in these days, send a text to let her know you are out front), but believe me, women love to be treated with that kind of respect. It truly speaks well of your character.

The Combined Whole.
Factors such as time, no-strings policy, and respect ideally blend together during dating. The more time a person spends dating a person, the greater the respect should grow. A no-strings attached policy leads to respect, and increased respect results in both the man and the woman wanting to spend more time with each other.

Nelson, Tommy, *The Book of Romance, What Solomon Says About Love, Sex, and Intimacy*

23 Things That Love Is

Dr. Paul David Tripp

Dr. Paul David Tripp was born on November 12, 1950 in Toledo, Ohio. He is a pastor, event speaker, and an award winning, best-selling author. He and his wife, Luella, married while he was still attending college. They have 4 children and reside in Philadelphia. His mission in his work is to have people realize that the grace of Jesus Christ comes with hope by connecting Christ's power to everyday life.

The Voice

"Twenty-three Things That Love Is" is well worth giving attention to if you are dating steadily and moving toward a long-term relationship. Real love goes beyond the initial attractiveness and excitement that first moves us to liking someone emotionally. This article helps us to focus on real love as God designed it. It talks about the daily sacrifices needed to love unceasingly; having the willingness to change ourselves, our behaviors, and our personal agendas so that loving the way Jesus did becomes easier and easier.

What I am about to write will surprise some of you, but I am convinced it is true. There are many more loveless marriages out there than you and I would tend to think. There are many relationships that end in marriage that seem founded on love but really are not.

As a young man, I was very attached to Luella, my wife now of 48 years, by the grace of God I had begun to think of what it would be like to spend my life with her, but I did not really know what love was.

When it comes to love, we have two problems. First, there are many things we call love that simply do not rise to the level of what love is. And we lack a clear definition of what love is and what love does.

So, in the midst of all the Valentine's Day messaging about what love is, here are 23 concrete descriptions of how real Christ-like love thinks and acts.

1. Love is . . . being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of others without impatience or anger.

2. Love is . . . actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward another while looking for ways to encourage and praise.

3. Love is . . . making a daily commitment to resist the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offenses.

4. Love is . . . being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding.

5. Love is . . . being more committed to unity and understanding than you are to winning, accusing, or being right.

6. Love is . . . making a daily commitment both to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame.

7. Love is . . . being willing, when confronted by another, to examine your own heart rather than to rise to your own defense to shift the focus.

8. Love is . . . making a daily commitment to grow in love so that the love you offer to another is increasingly selfless, mature, and patient.

9. Love is . . . being unwilling to do what you know is wrong when you have been wronged but looking instead for concrete and specific ways to overcome evil with good.

10. Love is . . . being a good student of another: looking for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs so that in some way you can remove the burden, support them as they vary it, or encourage them along the way.

11. Love is . . . being willing to invest the time necessary to discuss, examine, and understand relational problems, to stay on task until the problem is removed, or to agree upon a strategy of response.

12. Love is . . . being willing to always ask for forgiveness and always being committed to grant forgiveness when it is requested.

13. Love is . . . recognizing the high value of trust in a relationship and being faithful to your promises and true to your word.

14. Love is . . . speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack the other person's character or to assault their intelligence.

15. Love is . . . being unwilling to flatter, lie, manipulate, or deceive in any way in order to preempt the other person into giving you what you want or doing something your way.

16. Love is . . . being unwilling to ask another person to be the source of your identity, meaning and purpose, or inner sense of well-being, while refusing to be the source of theirs.

17. Love is . . . the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule in order to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do as a spouse, parent, neighbor, etc.

18. Love is . . . a commitment to say "no" to selfish instincts and to do everything that is within your ability to promote real unity, functional understanding, and active love in your relationships.

19. Love is . . . staying faithful to your commitment to treat another with appreciation, respect, and grace, even in moments when the other person does not seem deserving or is unwilling to reciprocate.

20. Love is . . . the willingness to make regular and costly sacrifices for the sake of a relationship without asking for anything in return or using your sacrifices to place the other person in your debt.

21. Love is . . . being unwilling to make any personal decision or choice that would harm a relationship, hurt the other person, or weaken the bond of trust between you.

22. Love is . . . refusing to be self-focused or demanding, but instead looking for specific ways to serve, support, and encourage, even when you are busy or tired.

23. Love is . . . daily admitting to yourself, the other person, and God that you are unable to be driven by a cruciform (cross-shaped) love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace.

Paul David Tripp, PhD., "*What Did you Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*"

Love is a decision,
not a feeling.

Gary Smalley
1944-2016

2

The Right Mate Is Worth the Wait

The Voice

Lifetime marriages do not just happen; they take work, perseverance, and trust. God wants you to find contentment for the long term, feel excited, fresh, and new, as each step takes you closer and closer to the one you choose for a lifetime partner. It is a process. Rewarding relationships develop over time. You need to discover what love looks like for the two of you, to learn how to express love in a language your mate will relate to and be continually drawn to as you spend more time together. Learning to love someone with a God-driven agenda, rather than a self-focused agenda, will help form a love that will go the lifetime distance.

When Tom was one year away from a five-year college degree in Chemical Engineering, our paths crossed again after a two-year breakup. Supporting my brother who was a 5-mile distance racer, I was attending a skate competition held in a huge coliseum. Suddenly, I felt as though someone was watching me. I looked around; then way across on the other side of this huge stadium, there was Tom staring at me. I did not understand it then, but I do now. Only God could have arranged for our eyes to meet in that crowded arena.

Tom called, asking if I would like to go out. I politely said, "No, thank you." I knew in my heart he was the one for me, but I also knew that he had a full year to go to complete his graduation goal while working to pay his tuition. What I did not know was Tom had done his homework, so to speak, and had a plan.

Long story short, after the initial refusal, Tom persisted and asked if he could come over so we could talk; I relented. He proposed on the spot and presented his plan for the following year. All the details of school, money, career, and future beginnings were worked out. I had a big decision to make. I am reminded of the story of Esther in the Bible who also had a big decision to make.

> *"For if you remain silent at this time . . . who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14)?*

While obviously I did not come from a royal position, it certainly felt like a huge decision. I said "YES!" The right mate is definitely worth the wait!

There will be other times in life that God will have you "wait" during your marriage journey. Tom's career prompted many moves including foreign assignments in his 36-year career. Looking back, I can see God's hand so clearly. God was growing us to be used for his purposes.

I must tell one funny story about our move to Geneva, Switzerland. Our belongings arrived by ship which took about six weeks. For six weeks, that's forty days, we stayed in a hotel with three small children just waiting. Tom was working every day. The children started school while living in the hotel. Before long, they felt right at home. They would run down to the hotel kitchen in their sock feet to tell the cooks what they would like to have in their lunches that day. They were running around like it was home. The children reminded me that home is where the heart is.

As we waited for our "home in a box" to arrive, I must say to Tom and me, those forty days seemed like an eternity! I was able to keep in perspective our plight by recalling the number forty often represented times of testing and hardship in the Bible. Just as God allowed Moses, Noah, Israelite spies, Elijah, Ezekiel, and even Jesus a period of trial, so God allowed us forty days to grow a little more on our own road to transformation.

Also, God was waiting for the right time to grow me into someone he

could use by teaching me to be open to women who struggled with foreign assignments. A willingness to share my own concerns and experiences helped others gain strength and courage. I learned that transformation takes time, effort, and the Holy Spirit. What an experience!

> *"The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Psalm 27:1-2,14).*

God desires to grow you too, into someone he can use for his glory as you wait for just the right mate. The wait is worth it as you trust in God's plan for your life.

The Wedding God Desires for You

Tommy Nelson

Pastor Tommy Nelson taught his first sermon series on the Song of Solomon in 1991. Since that day Tommy has become known as the "marriage pastor" and has gone on to teach time and time again on the subject. He states: "In a day when the institution of marriage is in jeopardy because of a lack of understanding on the topic, people want to know what the Bible has to say about marriage, love, and sex." He will reappear several times in this writing.

At the heart of any good marriage is a spiritual bond. Sex should flow out of that bond and enhance that bond. But until the spiritual bond is there, fully in place at the time of the wedding, the sexual bond is not likely to hold over time.

The most important part of any wedding ceremony is the intent of both individuals regarding marriage. Marriage should be entered into only if you are 100% desirous of making a vow before God to love the person who is standing by your side regardless of what happens for as long as you both shall live.

A great wedding is a divine appointment.
If you are thinking of your wedding as only a legal transaction from being unmarried to being married, or as only a party in which you share your love with your friends, think again. Your wedding is a moment both partners

should anticipate as a sacred moment. The word sacrament means literally "sacred moment," (dedicated, devoted exclusively to another person, set apart in honor of) and the sacrament of marriage is just that. It is a holy moment in which God is fully present as the foremost witness to the wedding vows.

The Voice

There are so many; wonderful and beautiful venues in planning a wedding day. Seeing to all the details to provide an atmosphere of celebration and beauty can become very time consuming and mentally mindboggling. Resist the urge to become so involved in the details of the wedding day that you forget the reason for coming together in the first place. This day is set apart divinely by God as a holy covenant of marriage in which as man and wife you become one flesh. That is extraordinary!

A great wedding is a time for celebration and joy.
Your wedding should be a time of joy, sweetness, and happiness. The atmosphere should be filled with laughter, praise, and song. The emotional climate of the room should be warm, with a feeling that no matter what might happen in the way of glitches in the pomp and circumstance, nothing truly matters except the love and happiness of the couple being united in holy matrimony.

March into your wedding with a glad heart. Celebrate the fact that God has brought you together, all the way through the dating and engagement process to the marriage altar.

A great wedding should have a supportive atmosphere.
Your wedding ceremony should reflect a sense of security, safety, protection, and solidarity. Part of the safety and security of the wedding ceremony will be evident in the people who serve as your best man, maid or matron of honor, groomsmen, and bridesmaids. Choose Godly people who will support you fully in the vows you make. As a whole, those who witness your marriage should be like a holy hedge of protection around you, keeping you focused on each other inside the circle of matrimony.

A great wedding is marked by strength.
A key ingredient of a great wedding is a strong groom. He is solid! Every woman wants to marry a man who is strong and who has not only character of substance but also real material substance to offer her. Women are drawn to strength of character.

A woman wants to see her husband maintain the same creative, passionate, zealous, ambitious character, as well as his leadership traits, to be manifested in the home to the same degree they are displayed at work. Many women also work these days to help financially, but the primary financial responsibility for a family usually rests with the husband. He must provide for the woman to remove any financial anxiety that could cause distress in their marriage.

A groom who knows that he is strong inside in faith and character will stand tall and proud. He is ready to assume the full responsibilities of marriage with deep, inner assurance. He desires to and can provide for his wife.

A great wedding has parental approval.
The only thing that makes it truly possible for Christian parents to give up their children to marriage is the belief that the marriage is God's plan. Their approval of a mate for their son or daughter is not only vital to overall family happiness, but also vital to the happiness of the couple getting married.

While you are dating, take time to get to know the family into which you will be marrying. You do not marry an isolated individual. You marry *all of the people* who are significant to that individual. You marry all the childhood memories; you marry the values and beliefs instilled in the person by the family, including values about marriage and parenting.

In some cases, the couple is not mature enough to "leave and cleave." At other times, the parents are not mature enough to let go. Both maturation processes need to be addressed early on so the wedding itself can truly become a day of letting go and celebrating together as family.

A great wedding should be a day of splendor.
There is nothing more romantic than being able to look ahead or look back to your wedding day and say, "What a day of joy and blessing and goodness!" Your wedding day truly should be the highlight of your life—a day when all of God's plans for you come into focus; and all that you have experienced previously becomes only a prelude to the symphony of your future. Your wedding should be a day of loving bliss, great romance, and deep emotional intimacy. Ask God to prepare you for that kind of wedding.

Nelson, Tommy, *The Book of Romance, What Solomon Says About Love, Sex, and Intimacy*

In marriage do thou be wise: prefer
the person before money,
virtue before beauty,
the mind before the body;
then thou hast a wife, a friend,
a companion, a second self.

William Penn
1644-1718

Building Marriages for Life

Laurin White

Laurin White oversees the Navigators, an international, interdenominational Christian Ministry. Their purpose is to know Christ, make him known, and help others to do the same. They minister in the spirit of 2 Timothy 4:7 as fighters, finishers, and faithful to God's call to make a vital contribution to the Great Commission. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

If marriage was designed by God, why do so many marriage relationships go steadily downhill?

I believe some marriages do not last a lifetime because many couples have never made in their hearts certain foundational decisions that build marriages for life. We are often told that marriage breakups are caused by difficulties centered around money, sex, and so on, but such problems are only symptoms of the real failure.

Interacting with couples, one often finds they have not yet developed one or more of six basic commitments and are now struggling as a result.

These commitments must be made *in heart*—for the heart is "the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Commitment 1: To grow in Christ for the rest of my life.
Not every Christian has decided to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). We often think we have already arrived, but Christ is not finished with us yet. For example, a two-year old child may act out like a two-year old, but he should eventually outgrow that behavior. In the same way, none of us has matured so much that our present state should be our permanent state. Develop a mindset to continue to grow in Christ.

In marriage, which demands increasing maturity in character, responsibility, and wisdom, non-growing Christians may have a more difficult time making it long term. Pride sometimes gets in the way making it hard to accept responsibility for corrections, rebukes, and questions that require them to humble themselves. An open, teachable person can develop the characteristics needed in a good marriage partner.

Commitment 2: To stay committed to our marriage for life and to work to solve problems.

This commitment provides the security of permanence and keeps us from running away from problems as they arise. The hope is: we face up to them, then solve them.

This commitment gives security amid a world in which "you will have trouble." Christ said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And it means living in hope that no problem is too great to be solved. God is working in your marriage to fulfill his own desires as well as yours even when we do not yet see him working.

Commitment 3: To be faithful to my mate in both mind and action.
Unfaithful actions can be headed off by a commitment to think romantically only about your husband or wife. "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

To decide, "My mate is the only one I will allow myself to think about in this way" will cut off a lot of problems before they begin. The result in your marriage will be a great level of mutual trust.

Commitment 4: To communicate—no matter what.
Most people are reluctant to reveal many of their thoughts and feelings because these are personal and so easily judged by others. This fear of judgment brings an attitude of "I'll never mention that."

But just as nothing can separate us from Christ's love, so nothing should stop us from communicating in marriage: silence, tears, explosions of anger, defiance, defensiveness, the children, or lack of time. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us" (Romans 8:35,37).

This is a commitment to communicate not just facts and accomplishments, but feelings, thoughts, problems, and failures. Both the positives and the negatives in our lives need expression. Communicating feelings strengthen a relationship and forms a stronger bond.

Commitment 5: To be a servant.
God created both men and women as servants of himself, of each other, and of their neighbors. The husband and wife are equal in dignity and worth and work together as "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7 RSV) to achieve common goals.

Yet they fulfill different roles. But the husband's success begins and ends with a servant's attitude. For both him and his wife, entering their roles with a willingness to serve each other will bring about mutual dependence and appreciation. The husband takes responsibility as the leader in a marriage. "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Commitment 6: To assume in everything that my mate's intentions are good. We are told not to impute evil to God. "When tempted, no one should say 'God is tempting me' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (James 1:13).

And in marriage we are likewise to assume the best about our partner's intentions. The results may sound questionable, but make sure you give your husband or wife the benefit of the doubt. By avoiding accusations and by keeping no record of wrongs, the two of you will have far less grounds for conflicts and hurt feelings. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

White, Laurin, Oversees Navigator Ministries

To the loved,
a word of affection is a morsel,
but to the love starved,
a word of affection
can be a feast.

Max Lucado
1955

The Five Love Languages

Gary Chapman

Gary Chapman was born on January 10, 1938. He is the Senior Associate Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC., and the Director of Marriage Family Life Consultants, Inc. He is an author, speaker, and counselor, passionate for helping people form lasting relationships. He travels the world presenting seminars on marriage.

Mr. Chapman feels there are five love languages vital to a lasting marriage Obviously, the desire for romantic love in marriage is deeply rooted in our psychological makeup. If you pick up almost any magazine in a waiting room or standing in line at the magazine section in any store, we see at least one issue on keeping love alive in a marriage. Television and radio talk shows deal with it. Keeping love alive in our marriages is serious business. The books and articles already published are helpful, but we have overlooked one fundamental truth: *People speak different love languages.* It is imperative that we learn to speak the love language on which our spouses can relate.

Our native tongue, for the most part, is learning the primary language of our parents, their native tongue. Later, we may learn additional languages but usually with much more effort. These become our secondary language. We speak and understand best our native language and we feel most comfortable speaking our native language. The more we use a secondary language, the more comfortable we become conversing in it. If we speak only our primary language and encounter someone else who speaks only his or her primary

language, which is different from ours, our communication will be limited. We must rely on pointing, grunting, drawing pictures, or acting out our ideas. We can communicate, but it is awkward. Language differences are a huge piece of human culture. If we are to communicate effectively across cultural lines, we must learn the language of those with whom we wish to communicate.

The Voice

While this has nothing to do with Chapman's Five Love Languages, reading this article reminded me of the time Tom actually bought a new car with no language skills of the seller. Now that was a true picture of pointing, grunting, drawing pictures and acting out that we continue to laugh about today.

Learning the love language of our spouse is similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English. We must be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love.

Mr. Chapman strongly feels that after more than thirty years of marriage counseling there are basically only five emotional love languages—five ways that people speak and understand emotional love. The important thing is to speak the love language of your spouse.

Identifying and learning to speak your spouse's primary love language, is the key to a long-lasting, loving marriage. Love need not evaporate after the wedding, but in order to keep it alive most of us will have to put forth the effort to learn a secondary love language, that of our spouse. If we want him/her to feel the love we are trying to communicate, we must express it in his or her primary love language.

So, let's take a look at the five love languages to decide which will communicate love to your spouse best.

#1 Words of Affirmation.

The object of love is not getting something you want but doing something for the well-being of the one you love. However, it is a fact, that when we receive affirming words, we are far more likely to be motivated to reciprocate.

Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your spouse's perspective. We must first learn what is important to our spouse.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4).

The tongue has the power of life and death. "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

Also see James 3, Proverbs 24:26, 25:15, Psalm 19:14, Matthew 12:34-35, Mark 15:17-18.

#2 Quality Time.

A central aspect of quality time is togetherness. I do not mean proximity . . . Togetherness has to do with focused attention.

Most of us have little training in listening. We are far more efficient in thinking and speaking. Learning to listen may be as difficult as learning a foreign language, but learn we must, if we want to communicate love. That is especially true if your spouse's primary love language is quality time.

"He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame" (Proverbs 18:13).

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another" (Zechariah 7:9).

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Also see Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Luke 10:38-42, 1 Peter 3:8, Philippians 2:5-8.

#3 Receiving Gifts.

If your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts, you can become a proficient gift giver.

In fact, it is one of the easiest love languages to learn.

Physical presence in the time of crises is the most powerful gift you can give if your spouse's primary love language is receiving gifts.

Gifts need not be expensive, nor must they be given weekly. But for some individuals, their worth has nothing to do with monetary value and everything to do with love.

> "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24).
>
> "All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing" (Proverbs 21:26).
>
> "Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate" (Proverbs 31:31).
>
> "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).
>
> "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12).
>
> "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
>
> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
>
> Also see Proverbs 18:16, Matthew 10:7-8, Matthew 7:9-11, Luke 21:1-4.

#4 Acts of Service.

Making requests give direction to love, whereas demands stop the flow of love.

After marriage, we revert to be the people we were before we "fell in love." Our actions are influenced by the model of our parents, our own personality, as well as our perceptions of love, our emotions, needs, and desires. Only one thing is certain about our behavior: It will not be the same behavior we exhibited when we were caught up in *being* in love.

> ". . . Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).
>
> "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).
>
> "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24).
>
> "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its variousforms" (1 Peter 4:10).
>
> Also see Luke 1:38, Luke 10:3-7, Luke 22:26-27, 1 Peter 4:11, Philippians 2:5-6.

#5 Physical Touch.

Physical touch can make or break a relationship. It can communicate hate or love.

If your spouse's primary love language is physical touch, nothing is more important than holding her as she cries.

Physical touch is not just sexual. Hold hands when walking, while sitting in church together, etc. Wait for one other when leaving the car so you can hold hands. It communicates I love you. I accept you. I am with you. I am on your side.

Chapman, Gary, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*

3

A God Created Marriage

The Voice

There is no doubt that God draws couples together for a purpose—for his purpose, and our wellbeing. Today some of the phrases we use for married couples reflect this: such as a match made in heaven or soulmates. Married couples must keep God at the center of their relationship and work together as one—to love and serve one another for their good and to accomplish God's purposes. When God is the third cord in a marriage, the couple is more fully whole working as one. In the 1996 film Jerry Maquire, Tom Cruise delivered the famous line, "you complete me" which still holds true today.

> *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).*

Our last foreign assignment was in Shenyang, China—six hundred miles northeast of Beijing and close to North Korea. It was cold country. We were there four years. God put us in a place where we could benefit the community if we were willing to be used. God continued to grow our faith and to give us strength and courage. We became increasingly hungry for the Word of God as we came together daily to compare Bible versions and talk. We attended an underground church where many missionaries

attended, but it was shut down by the government. We finally were able to use a licensed Korean church on Sunday afternoons and Tom and I began working with the missionaries on projects.

Even before we physically moved to China, God put a desire on my heart to work with the orphaned population. During one of our cultural training sessions I mentioned this to one of the leaders. He took me, on our bicycles, to meet a Christian Chinese lady, we'll call her Hope, who housed eleven orphaned children in a two-bedroom apartment—no bathtub, no hot water at the time. I started riding my bicycle there three or four times a week.

I soon became involved with helping these children become adopted. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had. At that time, the Chinese authorities were not too interested in allowing children with special needs to be adopted. It was a long difficult process which took time and perseverance. I helped prospective parents who waited weeks to complete the adoption process once they arrived in Shenyang. They needed assistance maneuvering the unfamiliar city.

Missionaries invited me to travel across town to the City Orphanage where we bathed, fed, had play time, and quietly prayed for the children. Otherwise, the children received no personal attention other than feeding time, but even then, baby bottles were often propped up. When we saw a child who was extremely ill, we always asked if we could take them to the hospital and then to Hope's for recovery. Sometimes the answer was no, but many times it was yes. It was difficult, but we held our emotions in when we saw the extreme neglect of the children. Jeremiah 29:11 was on my mind many times: "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future."

Tom and I loved working together with the missionaries. Our marriage relationship, and yours, was designed by God so that he could use us as a couple to give him the glory. I often think of the verse "for such a time as this" in the Book of Esther and compare it to a once in a lifetime opportunity. God gives us many opportunities, so let's not let them pass us by.

Tom made an extremely important decision at the plant site where he worked. Mind you, the Chinese government does not allow any discussion

of Christianity—no discussion of the Bible or Christ—no open evangelizing, but we learned that one could share their culture! So, Tom seized this opportunity. December 25th became a holiday for the whole site. Workers got the day off, a dinner party was held, and Tom, using an interpreter, shared his culture by telling the Christmas story—the story of Christ. This decision was huge, but we depended fully on God. Putting God first and serving him grew our faith and helped our marriage become stronger than ever.

Several months later, both Tom and I were invited to be the guest speakers during a Chinese English Class. Once again, we took the opportunity to share our culture. I made some home-made bread and talked about joining in celebration by sharing the broken bread together and what it represented in our culture. Tom and I were telling the story of Christ, in our own language. . . speaking slowly. Toward the end of our message, five well-dressed men came into the room, rather than sitting down, they stood at the back with their hands crossed in front.

I looked at Tom and he looked at me, with a slight nod, I continued since I was speaking at the time. At the completion of the English lesson, the Chinese teacher told us we had been invited to lunch and we would all go the restaurant in a big van. Praise God, it ended up being a wonderful experience. Tom and I joked later that we were wondering if that lunch would be our last meal—never to be seen again! God was our strength and our hope as we relied on him.

Today, Tom and I continue to work with the Chinese missionaries, serving on the Board of Directors for Asian Children's Rescue and Relief whose home office is in Tulsa, Oklahoma where the Board meets occasionally, but most often via telephone. Our stateside role is handling their participation in the annual USA Combined Federal Campaign and several workplace campaigns which are like United Way. Also, we have taken several groups from our home church, Westport Road Baptist Church, in Louisville, KY on mission trips to the area we serve.

Marriage is God's design, and he asks us to be equally yoked—to marry someone who has the same goals and love for Christ as you do. This makes it possible for you to serve him in ways you could never do alone.

The Divine Design for Marriage

Ronald Sauer, PhD.

Genesis 2:8-25

Ron and Sue Sauer are best known for their "Sweet and Sour" ministry. They feel that Biblical Marriage Training is truth expressed in love. We depend on God's Word to supply this truth. When we are hurting in our marriages, we can diminish the self-inflicted pain and suffering when we follow his divine plan. We will see Dr. Sauer again within these pages.

Here, Dr. Sauer goes into great detail explaining God's creation of male and female and the need for man to have a helper. The helper's Hebrew name is *ishah* meaning woman. Notice that *ishah* was formed to help man obey God. Dr. Sauer's introduction of Hebrew words helps to better understand God's intent and the way he chose to create *ish*'s mate.

"Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed" (Genesis 2:8). Hebrew: *yasar*—like a potter's mud.

> "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." God gave man the responsibility to work. "And the LORD God commanded the man: "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

God gave man boundaries to protect him and fatherly consequences.

Man's command was to direct authoritatively, to give orders, and to dominate from an elevated position.

"The LORD God said, it is not good (Hebrew: *lo tob*—really bad) for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). He made man a helper to help him obey. God made man relational and wants most of us to be married.

"Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So, the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all

the beasts of the field, but for Adam no suitable helper was found" (Genesis 2:19-20). God gave man the responsibility of naming the animals, and the authority to be the leader of Eden. All the animals had companions.

"So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made (Hebrew: *banah*—built; shaped beautifully like Solomon's Temple) a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:21-22). God carefully prepares a man and woman for each other. Woman is just the companion man needs. God brings two people together even geographically.

The man said, At last! This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. (Hebrew: *ishah*—woman, *ish*—man) In Hebrew, man and woman both carry the same degree of honor and dignity. God causes a man and woman to recognize that they are meant for each other.

> "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. . . Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:7,9).

"For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) – emotionally, physically, and financially.

"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). The sexual relationship is a wonderful part of marriage. Husbands and wives possess the most intimate of relationships united as one.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. . . Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? . . . A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 11-12).

Sauer, Ronald, PhD., Bible Professor, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, Oral Presentation

The woman was made out of a rib out of
the side of Adam; not made out of his head
to rule over him, not out of his feet to
be trampled upon by him, but
out of his side to be equal with him,
under his arm to be protected, and
near his heart to be beloved.

Matthew Henry
1662-1714

The Specific to Formation of Eve Marriage Instituted, Genesis 2:21-25, NKJV

Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry, 1662-1714, was born near Wales. He was home educated by his father, Reverend Philip Henry, and at the Thomas Doolittle Academy from 1680-1682. Henry first started studying law in 1862, but instead of pursuing a career in law he began to preach in his neighborhood. He was ordained in London and began his ministry at Chester in 1687.He married Katherine Hardware July 19, 1687, but she died in February 1689 during childbirth. Henry's Exposition of the Old and New Testament was begun in November 1704 with the first volume being published in 1708. Four other volumes to the end of the gospels appeared in 1710. Before his death he completed the Acts for an unpublished sixth volume.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

And Adam said:
'This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh:
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.'

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:21-25).

The making of the woman to be a helpmate for Adam. In Hebrew the word "helpmate," is derived from two words, *ezer* and *k'enegdo* meaning help and mate or meet.

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

"Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13). "For man is not from woman, but a woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

The Making of the Woman to be a Suitable Helper for Adam

While Adam named all the animals and had dominion over them, no suitable helper was found. The animals will not suit the nature of his soul, nor supply his needs, nor satisfy his just desires, nor run parallel with his never-failing duration. We see here:

1. That Adam was first formed, then Eve. If man is the head, she is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, once further removed from the earth (dust).

2. That Adam slept while his wife was in the making as one who had cast all his care on God, with a cheerful resignation of himself and all his affairs to his Maker's will and wisdom.

Jehovah-Jireh, let the Lord provide when and whom he pleases.

3. That God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While he knows no sin, God will take care he shall feel so pain.

4. That the woman was made from the rib he had taken out of the man; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, not out of his feet to be trampled on my him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

The Marriage of the Woman to Adam

Marriage is honorable, but this surely was the most honorable marriage that ever was, in which God himself had all along an immediate hand. Marriages, they say, are made in heaven: we are sure this was, for the man, the woman, the match, were all God's own work. He by his power, made them both, and now, by his ordinance, made them one.

1. God as *her* Father, brought the woman to the man, as his second self, and a suitable helper for him. That wife who is of God's making by special grace, and of God's bringing by special providence, is likely to prove a suitable helper for a man.

2. From God, as *his* Father, Adam received her (Genesis 2:23). God's gifts to us are to be received with a humble thankful acknowledgement of his wisdom in suiting them to us, and his favor in bestowing them on us. Further, as a sign of his acceptance of her, he gave her a name, not unique to her, but common to her sex. She shall be called "woman" (*Ishah*, a she-man), differing from man in sex only, not in nature.

The Institution of the Ordinance of Marriage

The sabbath and marriage were two ordinances instituted in innocence, the former for the preservation of the church, the latter for the preservation of the world of mankind. It appears (by Matthew 19:4-5) that it was God himself who said here, "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife."

1. See here how great the virtue of a divine ordinance is; the bonds of it are stronger even than those of nature.

2. See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage.

3. See what need there is both of prudence and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting.

4. See how firm the bond of marriage is, not to be divided and weakened by having many wives, nor to be broken or cut off by divorce, for any cause but fornication, or voluntary desertion.

"But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks Godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2:15).

5. See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife, such as there is to our own bodies. These two are one flesh let them then be one soul.

"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

An Evidence of the Purity and Innocence of that State wherein our First Parents were Created

They were both naked. They needed no clothes for defense against cold nor heat. Indeed, they needed none for decency; they were naked, and had no reason to be ashamed. They did not know what shame was, so the Aramaic reads it. Those who had no sin in their conscience might well have no shame in their faces, though they had no clothes to their backs.

Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible, a commentary to the history of the creation, specifically the creation of the woman, her marriage to the man and the institution of the ordinance of marriage

The Purpose and Nature of Marriage

Tom and Sandy Baker

Tom holds a BSChE and MBA and is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He serves on the Board of Directors of Asian Children's Rescue and Relief in Shenyang, China. Tom has a prison ministry and is a Bible Study Leader. He occasionally counsels those struggling with personal finances, and as a couple, we do marriage counseling for newlyweds. Sandy most importantly is Tom's helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led *Thoroughly Equipped*, a 21-month Discipleship Curriculum, several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the orphanage/adoption arena while in China, one of her most humbling experiences.

1. Marriage was instituted and ordained by God as the most basic relationship between man and woman and for our good. It is the formation of a new union and fellowship, the foundation for society.

Good marriages do not just happen by accident; they are the result of hard work, proper priorities and an unflinching commitment to faithfulness. At the heart of every Christian marriage is a marriage of Christian hearts.

> "Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which he has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:9 NASB).
>
> "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:31-33).
>
> "Rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18).
>
> "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

2. Marriage is a one-flesh covenant relationship. The Christian cannot discuss sex without marriage—it is just that simple. Fidelity safeguards sexual expression and is the remedy for sexual immorality. The cities Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29) were turned to ashes as a matter of God's holy wrath, specifically because their inhabitants had given themselves to sexual immorality and abnormal sexual practices. God rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the lives of these men whom he was living among and being tormented by them. (2 Peter 2:6-7; Jude 7)

> "Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).
>
> ". . . So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6).
>
> "She is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant" (Malachi 2:14).
>
> "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4).
>
> "After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:29-30).

3. Marriage requires deep commitment, qualified only by one's relationship and responsibility to God. Faithfulness is a metaphor of spiritual truth.

Just as our own personal spiritual life is formed through a lifetime of daily experiences in which we turn our wills over to God, so a God-formed marriage is developed through daily behaviors in which each individual is focused on how his or her outward actions can inspire life in the other.

A loving marriage is something that is made. You will discover that a relationship can be built—or rebuilt—on truth, which creates a solid foundation that will help you reach the full potential of your marriage.

Marriages do not fail because you married the wrong person; they fail because you have not learned the language that makes deposits into your spouse's love bank to cover the withdrawals you are making. Take the time to learn what makes them tic.

Your marriage was not a mistake! Mistakes may have been made since your wedding day, but those mistakes can be corrected. With some work,

your marriage can become strong and vibrant, the way God intended your marriage to be.

> "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also, to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).
>
> "Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.
>
> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24).
>
> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:25-28).

4. Marriage is to be entered into by two people equally yoked. Be proactive. Invest in each other becoming a power-filled partnership. Fruitfulness in marriage is a safeguard for procreation and child rearing.

> "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28).
>
> "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3 NASB).
>
> "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

5. Marriage is temporal, but points to eternal realities. Temporal is usually defined as pertaining to the present life, or this world.

> "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

This can be a confusing verse for many. The Bible does *not* teach there will be no marriages in Heaven. In fact, it makes clear there *will* be marriage in

Heaven. What it says is that there will be *one* marriage, between Christ and his bride—and we will be part of it.

The one-flesh marital union we know on Earth is a signpost pointing to our relationship with Christ as our bridegroom. Once we reach the destination, the signpost becomes unnecessary.

That one marriage—our marriage to Christ—will be so completely satisfying that even the most wonderful earthly marriage could not be as fulfilling.

6. Marriage is meant to reflect something of God's nature. One of the most cited Old Testament verses remind believers that: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Hebrew word for one (*ehad*) is not primarily a mathematical observation—that there is one of him. It is an assertion about God's nature. He is One. There is a unity to him. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three different persons. But all that this triune God is, does, and says is perfectly integrated as One.

The very same word is used to describe the union of the man and woman in marriage. They become one (*ehad*) flesh. Marriage is a wonderful God-given way for humanity to reflect the unity and diversity that is seen in the Trinity. God's oneness is not sameness, as though the three persons of the Trinity were identical to one another. It is unity in difference, not uniformity. And the same is true of the union of a man and a woman.

The same is not true of same-sex attraction. Two men or two women cannot become one flesh. They cannot become one (*ehad*) in the way that God is one and, in the way that a man and a woman are one.

7. Marriage was created to be between a male and a female.

> "So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;male and female he created them. God blessed them and said, be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:27-28).
>
> "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).
>
> "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 2:31).

God created mankind as male and female, to procreate within the context of marriage.

Same sex behavior violates God's original plan for heterosexual monogamy.

The seriousness of homosexuality is indicated by the severity of the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29) when both cities were destroyed, as the Lord rained down brimstone and fire on them. These two cities were turned to ashes as a matter of God's holy wrath, specifically because their inhabitants had given themselves over to sexual immorality and practiced perversions.

> "If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy livesof lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue Godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgement, while continuing their punishment" (2 Peter 2:6-9).

The Voice

All this dread and yet on the cross Jesus Crist stands as a beacon of light. Life, hope, forgiveness, and change really are possible! We can be rescued from ourselves by the power of grace. We are all case studies of mercy extended. We have all gone astray in one way or another. Forgiveness is available for the asking. Cling to the truth of God's Word and his love for you. YOU are the one for whom he sacrificed his life on the cross so that you can enjoy life eternal.

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The Christian View of Homosexuality

Glenn Stanton

Mr. Stanton serves as the Director of Global Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family, an international organization working to build thriving families around the globe. He is a contributing founder of the growing movement to recover marriage as a social resource in improving the well-being of children, women, men, and communities. He served the George W. Bush administration for many years as a consultant on increasing fatherhood involvement in the Head Start program.

While there are people of many diverse beliefs and convictions, including gay and lesbian people, who oppose same-sex marriage, here are ten foundational truths that inform the traditional, orthodox Christian belief.

All humans are simultaneously sinful and loved.
All people, regardless of their story, are deeply and unconditionally loved by God, each created with profound dignity and worth, not one more than another. This is more than mere religious happy talk. It is truth whether one is gay, straight, or otherwise. But all people are also stricken with a terminal illness: sin; everyone, no exceptions and to the same degree. Our sin demands our repentance and needs forgiveness, and God's love and grace are where we find both. This is basic Christianity and the great equalizer of all people.

> "All Scripture is God breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Jesus was not silent on homosexuality.
Some claim Jesus never said anything about homosexuality and therefore is neutral on the topic. This is not true. Jesus was unequivocal in saying that to understand marriage and the sexual union, we must go back to the beginning and see how God created humanity and to what end. (Matthew 19 and Mark 10) Jesus holds up the creation story in Genesis not as a quaint Sunday school lesson, but as authoritative. It reminds us that God created each of us male and female, each for the other. And the sexual union that God created and ordained is for husband and wife to come together in physical union as one flesh.

> "But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Mark 10:6-7).

Scripture dictates the sexual union between husband and wife.
Both Jesus and all of Scripture approve of no other sexual union than that between a husband and wife. This is the uncontested historical teaching of Judaism and Christianity, and it is not something that true Christianity is free to adjust with the times.

Male and female complete God's image on earth.
It is not just mere "traditionalism" that has sex distinct marriage the norm for Christians.

It is a common grace God has always given to all people that is rooted in deeper theological reasons. The first chapter of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures tells us that humanity is uniquely created to show forth the image of God in the world to make visible the invisible. God does this not just in generic, and erogenous (having both masculine and feminine characteristics) humanity, but through two very similar but distinct types of humans: male and female. They are human universals, not cultural constructs.

When God said that it "is not good that the man be alone" in Genesis 2:18, he was not lamenting that Adam did not have a buddy or was just lonely. He was saying that the male could not really know himself as male without a human other who equally shared his humanity but was meaningfully distinct right down to every bit of her DNA. The same is true for her in Adam. In both Jewish and Christian belief, both male and female become fully human in their correspondence and contrast with one another. This does not happen solely in marriage, but it does happen most profoundly and mysteriously in marriage.

Sex is indeed about babies.
It is a new and culturally peculiar idea that human sexuality is all about intimacy and pleasure, but not necessarily babies. Babies and reproduction matter. And sure, while not every male/female sexual engagement is toward the end of procreation, intimacy, and pleasure matter as well. It has been the overwhelming norm and desire in nearly all marital relationships throughout time. That some couples are infertile either by age or incapability does not diminish or challenge this reality. Infertility is the vast exception for male/female couples. It is the fact of same-sex unions, a situation in which further progress is impossible. Heterosexual union reaches into and creates the next generation. To establish a sexual relationship without any interest in or openness to babies is contrary to God's intention for such relationships.

> Referring to God's covenant with Noah: "As for you, be fruitful and increase in number, multiply on the earth and increase upon it" (Genesis 9:7).

Children have a right to a mother and father.
Every person ever born can track his origin to a mother and a father. There are no exceptions, including those artificially produced. This was the first command God gave to the first two humans to come together and bring forth the coming generations of new divine image-bearers.

Nearly all cultures everywhere in the world throughout historical times hold as fundamental that every child should be loved and raised by a mother and father. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes a mother and father as a basic right of every child.

The Voice

One of the most important reasons for coming forth with this writing is the hope that many families would consider the children growing up in homes where there is no father. Men in the household may come and go but it is important for the security and wellbeing of the child to understand who their birthfather is. As the child matures, it is equally important for them to meet their birth father and communicate with them as adults if at all possible.

Same Sex Attraction, acted upon, is a sin.
It is when we act upon unhealthy attractions that provokes the sinful nature. We all have some manner of sexual drive that compels us to want to disobey God's design for sexuality. But while temptation is universal, it is different from sin. Scripture tells us that Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are but did not sin (Hebrews 4:5). Sexual sin is giving into a desirous nature in either mind or body. Faithful Christian discipleship cannot avoid temptation, but it strives to resist and master it with God's help through obedience and dependence upon Christ.

> "No temptation has seized you except what is common to an. And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Many are indeed same sex attracted believers who live obediently within a Christian sexual ethic. It can be difficult, just as it is for heterosexuals, those attracted to the opposite sex, to live within the boundaries of a Christian marriage lifestyle. Christianity requires that we each subjugate, bring under control, our sexual desires as well as many other desires to our faith commitment.

Countless same sex attracted believers do so willingly and joyfully.

> "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him"(James 1:12)

Sexual intimacy is *not* a right.
Every Christian has limitations placed on his sexuality. For married Christians, it is exclusive to one's spouse. For the single and engaged, it is abstinence. Sex is *not* a right, but a gift. The gift giver, Christ, knows what is best for us.

Rewriting God's rules is never an option.
One of the marks of a Christian is his or her desire to be obedient to Christ's teaching. Certainly, most of us would like to rewrite the Scriptures to make life easier. I would change where Christ says that lust is the same as doing the deed. Christianity is a demanding faith. The Scriptures define and change us, not the other way around. A Biblical sexual ethic does not, indeed cannot, change with the times.

> "But, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" 2 Peter 3:18).

People are more than their sexuality.
To identify people by their sexuality alone is to reduce people to their sexuality. Every individual is so much more. A person's inherent and undeniable value is rooted in his membership in humanity, not his particularity, sexual or otherwise. To advocate for extending rights to someone based in particular and occasionally mutable desires, relationships, and behaviors, as important as they might be to the individual, is actually a violation of the principle of universal human rights.

Stanton, Glenn, Director of Global Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family

On
"One flesh"

...not expressing a sentiment
but stating a fact—
just as one is stating a fact when one says
that a lock and key are one mechanism,
or that a violin and a bow
are one musical instrument.

C. S. Lewis
1898-1963

Moving to Deeper Levels of Intimacy

Tommy Nelson

Pastor Tommy Nelson taught his first sermon series on the Song of Solomon in 1991. Since that day Tommy has become known as the "marriage pastor" and has gone on to teach time and time again on the subject. He states: "In a day when the institution of marriage is in jeopardy because of a lack of understanding on the topic, people want to know what the Bible has to say about marriage, love, and sex." He will reappear several times in this writing.

When couples go out to eat together one can sit and almost instantly pick out those who are recently married and those who have been married for a while. The newly marrieds treat each other with tenderness and affection, but by comparison, the couples who have been married for a while sit in silence, staring off in space, or spend the time waiting for their meal playing with their cell phones. So often marriage partners start out sizzling with passion and then dissipate into mere roommates. A loss of romance does not need to occur; yet in so many marriages, it does. The heat of passion and all displays of tender giving seem to vanish, and we accept it as normal, saying, "That's just the way it is."

In too many marriages, time seems to erode away, slowly but surely, communication, caring, affection, sensitivity, intimacy, and spontaneity. The marriage begins to revolve more around the children than around the two spouses. When the children leave home, the two then look at each other across the kitchen table and ask, "Who are you?" They have lost the core of what made them a couple in the first place. While nothing of a serious nature or conflict seemed to have occurred, but the couple stopped turning toward each other and began turning away from each other to individual pursuits and interests. This is not God's desire for marriage. Rebel against such error!

Factors that Kill Romance

The first is sin. Romance dies when one or both mates become so wounded and disillusioned with a spouse that they become calloused. Sin and harsh actions are unrepented of until the wounds of sin have removed all feeling.

> "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars gates of a castle" (Proverbs 18:19 NKJV).

Age can become another killer of romance. Outer beauty degenerates over time; age takes its toll on every person. Unless you continue to see beyond the wrinkles around your beloved's eyes and gaze into the full depths of their soul, you will feel less attracted to them, thus, likely to express less romance.

> "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Taking one another for granted can lead to another pitfall, forgetfulness. When couples forget the preciousness of their mates, too often they begin to take each other for granted and lose sight of just how special they are to each other. Romance requires that each person continue to remember the special traits in their spouse that fueled attraction during the initial stages of their relationship. God calls a man's bride "the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:14).

The Voice

What I call "keeping the home fires burning" is extremely important if one wants to remain attractive to one's spouse; no matter what your age.

Simple acts of kindness speak volumes to your spouse. For example, small surprises show that you are thinking of them, simple gestures say, "I love you and I want to be with you" without saying a word. And lastly, get into the habit of waiting for one another when getting out of the car and holding hands as you walk to your destination.

Laziness: what a tempting trait to creep into one's life. But love must be shown. Honor must be expressed. Cherish is an attitude that must be displayed. Passionate marriages are so by design and intent. Romance is a discipline. It is not too late. Romance can be reintroduced into your marriage.

> "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

Keeping Romance Alive in Your Marriage

Men should take the lead in being the Romeo. Every woman on earth wants to be treated with tenderness, romance, consideration, courtesy, etiquette, and delicate care. In her heart she is your Juliet.

Rather than throwing all your energy into a few occasions like Christmas, Valentine's Day, anniversaries, or birthdays; make it your resolve to be romantic throughout the year rather than taking the *business as usual* attitude having splurged at Christmas time for example. Be creative and let your wife know in little ways that she is special to you.

Romance is rooted to a marked degree in the spontaneous and unexpected spreading out displays of affection over an entire year rather than a few events. A marriage relationship needs nourishing, and "frequent feedings" is a good principle to follow. When asked what she would like from her husband, one wife said she wanted him to pick her up like he did when they were dating. What she meant was that she wanted him to flirt with her like he used to. And that he did! Something youthful and passionate had been rekindled.

Continue to Date.
Set aside specific time to spend together, and then do not let other things become a higher priority. When you are with your wife close out all other distractions. Women, your challenge is to make sure your man feels that he is the most highly respected man on the universe. Listen to each other. Display your best manners, be courteous, respectful, and tender. When you do this

with a genuine heart your spouse will notice. This is your time to be alone without distractions. Setting aside a night a week to be with your spouse sends a strong message to your children and anyone else who may be observing your marriage, that you value your relationship. Remember we vowed to "love, honor and cherish." That sends a strong positive message to on-lookers.

The Voice

Gary Chapman has created "101 Conversation Starters for Couples." These can be great fun on a date night, time set aside to focus solely on each other. That means cell phones put away and out of sight. These cards will help you get to know one another better, dream together, and laugh together. You will find a sampling listed in the Appendix B of "Marriage for Life."

Greater Appreciation Than Ever Before

As the years go by, how can we continue to show heartfelt love and appreciation to our spouse? In reading through the Song of Solomon, we can see that he was continually praising and making honorable and trustworthy comments. His wife was called a "prince's daughter."

Solomon pinned this statement:

> Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her; "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all" (Proverbs 31:28-29 NKJV).

Men, can we say from the heart that, my wife "excels them all?" Wife, be to your husband the kind of woman that Solomon's wife was to him. Make your husband proud of you in all that you do. Husbands, be the kind of man to your wife that Solomon was to his wife—be willing to serve her and to praise her. Praise is payday.

> "Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate" (Proverbs 31:31).

No matter how old a woman may get, she can still have a youthful spirit about her, and she can still be responsive to her husband—traits that delight a man and give him a renewed sense of his youth and ability to perform sexually.

Certain things about sexual intimacy may change over time. But if, as a couple, each has a desire for and a delight in the other, you will experience a

"forever young" aspect to your sexual union, regardless of how old you are in physical years.

Husbands, always treat your wife as the queen of your home. Be totally captivated by her. Many times, the man gains the power and energy to become what he undertakes in the business world because the strength of his wife rests behind his strength. Women, become your spouse's place of refuge and pleasure. Can he say, "My home is wherever my wife happens to be at the time?"

Appreciation Expressed in Tender Words.
The way a woman spells love over time is *tenderness*. The way a man spells love over time is *respect*.

When a woman feels that her husband deals with her tenderly—with kindness, good manners, generosity, genuine affection, and understanding— you will see a happily married woman, regardless of external circumstances that may come against their union or family. This woman will have no desire to seek tenderness from someone outside the marriage.

When a husband feels that his wife deals with him with respect—admiration, appreciation, his dignity as a man, thankfulness for his protection and provision—you will see a happily married man, regardless of the stress he may feel from the outside world. This man will delight in coming home and closing the front door behind him so that he can be with his wife and family.

The Element of Good Surprise.
An appealing aspect of romance is that it is *unexpected*. Do not allow any single romantic act to be reduced to routine. Stay creative. At the heart of romance is God's creative spirit. God's principles are always true and absolute; nothing about his character changes. God's methods are always new; they are different in every situation. Stay steadfast in your love for your spouse. But stay innovative in the way you express your love.

> "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The Voice

George Barna's statistics quoted that over 80% of children, when asked, could not visualize their parents as having sex. Why do you think he received that response? Could it be that most couples have fallen into just

existing together without any display of affection; no hugs, no cuddling on the couch, no kisses? Perhaps somewhere along the way, they stopped showing romantic affection toward one another. Wouldn't it be great if the home were where children learned what healthy affection looks like between husbands and wives?

Nelson, Tommy, *The Book of Romance; What Solomon Says About Love, Sex, and Intimacy*

The Wedding Prayer

Create in us a love, O Lord, An eternal love: Your love.
A love that forgives any failure,
Spans any distance, withstands any tempest.

Create in us a love, O Lord. A new love. A fresh love.
A love with the tenderness of a lamb,
The grandeur of a mountain,
The strength of a lion.

And make us one: Intimately one,
As you made a hundred colors into one sunset,
A thousand cedars into one forest,
And countless stars into one galaxy . . .
Make our two hearts as one, Father, forever . . .
That you may be praise, Father, forever.

Max Lucado
1955

4

Blending Differences To Create Strengths

The Voice

It amazes me how Tom and I are so different in our thinking, and the way we process information, yet work well together. It is miraculous! How can we be so completely attracted to one another, yet be so drastically different in so many areas of life? It is because God created us that way! Marriage is a wonderful God-given way for humanity to reflect the unity and diversity that is seen in the Trinity. God's oneness is not sameness, as though the three persons of the Trinity were identical to one another. It is unity; becoming one despite our differences, not uniformity, becoming completely the same. And the same is true of the union of a man and a woman.

God designed each of us with different talents and abilities, with different strengths and weaknesses. There are things that Tom finds easy to do but, for me, they are a real struggle, and vice versa. But God allows this to help us serve one another in love. And when two people become one in marriage, God blends their skills and gifts together and makes them stronger than they would be alone. Using our strengths together allows us to be a team and to work more productively and accomplish more for God's glory than either of us could alone.

Gary Chapman says: "If the husband and wife develop a positive emotional climate between the two of them, they will learn to work together as a team; encouraging, supporting, and helping each other reach meaningful goals." Tom and I each have our moments of struggle, but with God's provision, we have found creative ways to work together. I would never have become the woman I am thus far without the encouragement and loving support from Tom's gentle nudges along the way.

At the height of Tom's business career, we were being transferred every three or four years which usually meant more responsibilities, which also included learning and assimilating different languages and cultural differences. Tom took care of the technical portion of the business because that is where his strengths lie. I did my best to relieve him of planning out-of-office functions. Some of my duties included event planning, hosting, and preparing business dinners at our home as well as those dinner parties held at hotels for larger functions. Those functions sometimes meant working with hotel chefs to create a delicious meal, and a fun atmosphere for the visiting executives and their wives.

While in Puerto Rico, we decided to hold an outdoor party at our home. A chef roasted a whole pig which was brought to the house in a big red wagon. After the tables and decorations were set up, I decided to string lights around the courtyard and patio. Everything was ready and looked terrific. However, suddenly, there was, potentially, a huge problem.

In the late afternoon we lost electricity, which is common in Puerto Rico. Long story short, our Puerto Rican guests could have cared less and had a great time. Their culture is very laid back. For example, it is common for the Puerto Rican guests to arrive an hour or so later than the invitation time, although the Gringos arrived exactly at the scheduled moment. From my experience, the Puerto Rican culture is great at adapting to new situations, just as our guests did. Also, the Puerto Rican culture is quick to volunteer when crises arise, like hurricane damage to homes. They quickly pitch in to help.

All cultures have different strengths and weaknesses, just as couples do. Every time we moved to a foreign location; we took cultural education classes to learn how to better integrate with the people where we would be living.

Hopefully by reading "Marriage for Life," you will gain insights as a couple, learn to blend your differences, and compromise to find solutions. In marriage, our differences can either tear us apart or provide greater strength moving forward. It is important to focus more on one another's strengths than weaknesses; building one another up rather than tearing one another down. We need to be aware of times we find ourselves lacking

empathy or feeling jealous. We must remember that God gave our spouse different strengths and weaknesses, and he wants to use us both. Thinking about teamwork is a win-win for your personal life and marriage.

As of March 2020, the world population was 7.8 billion. Imagine how much diversity would be reflected in the world's population? It is a challenge for us to open our minds to different thought processes other than our own. But relax, in marriage, we only need to focus our attention on one another!

Men's Five Basic Needs in Marriage

How to Affair Proof Your Marriage

Kristen Sauder

Kristen Sauder graduated from Moody Bible Institute in 1991 with her husband, Kurt, launching them into a life of disciple-making and pouring their lives into people for the great passion of Kristen's life: Jesus. She was not only a wife and mother but also, a speaker, writer, and leader with Further Still Ministries which she founded with her husband. Kristen was 45 years old when she passed on January 22, 2014 after a courageous fight with cancer. "Because of Jesus I have been set free. The day I head home will be a day of victory, joy, and celebration because I am with the One who loves me more than anyone. God is good. He is faithful. He is true. He is the rock."

Sexual Fulfillment.
The typical wife does not fully understand her husband's deep need for sex any more than the typical husband fully understands the wife's deep need for affection. Just as sex and affection are different so are husbands and wives different.

Recreational Companionship.
Because a husband needs his wife to be his playmate, the wife needs to engage in recreational activities that both she and her husband enjoy together. It makes sense that the person with whom you share your most enjoyable moments will make the most deposits in your love bank. If you want a fulfilling marriage, his playmate must be YOU!

An Attractive Spouse.
Attractiveness is what you do with what you have. I am not encouraging you to try to look like a beauty queen. You should try to look the way your husband likes you to look. You should resemble the woman he married.

Domestic Support.
So deep is a man's need for domestic support that he often fantasizes about how she will greet him lovingly at the door, with well-behaved children who will likewise act glad to see him and welcome him into the comfort of a well-maintained home.

He needs a wife who urges him to sit down and relax before taking part in a tasty dinner. Dinner conversation should be nothing controversial. Later, the family goes for a delightful evening stroll and returns to put the children in bed with no hassle or fuss. Then he and his wife talk together, watch a little TV, and go to bed to make love. I can hear the laughter now!!! I know this is only a fantasy. But find out what he wants, create a plan, and do it.

Admiration.
He needs her to be proud of him. Self-esteem usually begins at home. Behind every man should be an admiring, respectful wife. This wife avoids criticizing him and always appreciates him more than anyone else.

Test yourself from time to time. Ask your spouse to list their needs in order of importance. Then ask them, on a scale of one to ten: "How am I doing with regards to each one? What can I do to better meet those needs?"

These five basics: sexual fulfillment, recreational companionship, an attractive spouse, domestic support, and admiration; are needs counselors have identified that men expect their wives to fulfill. The needs of men and women are so different; no wonder we have difficulty adjusting in marriage. A man can have the best intentions to meet his wife's needs, but if he thinks her needs are like his own, he will fail miserably. When women assume men appreciate the same gestures of kindness they like, women will also fail.

Often the failure of men and women to meet each other's emotional needs is simply a result of ignorance of each other's needs and not selfish unwillingness to be considerate. Many needs go unmet because we fail to understand that there are basic *gender differences* between male and female. Fulfilling those needs does not mean you have to painfully grit your teeth and make the best of something you hate. It means preparing yourself to meet needs you may not appreciate or fully understand because you are of the opposite gender.

By learning to understand your mate as a very different person than you, you can begin to become almost an expert in meeting that person's emotional

needs: making deposits in your mate's love bank, a love bank that never closes. Once a spouse lacks fulfillment of any of these basic needs, it creates a thirst that must be quenched. If changes do not occur within the marriage to care for that need, the individual may face a powerful temptation to fill it outside of the marriage.

Sauder, Kristen, Previously a Further Still Ministries Radio Talk Show Host, Retreat Presentation

Things a Woman Needs from Her Man

Kristen Sauder

Kristen Sauder graduated from Moody Bible Institute in 1991 with her husband, Kurt, launching them into a life of disciple-making and pouring their lives into people for the great passion of Kristen's life: Jesus. She was not only a wife and mother but also, a speaker, writer, and leader with Further Still Ministries which she founded with her husband. Kristen was 45 years old when she passed on January 22, 2014 after a courageous fight with cancer. "Because of Jesus I have been set free. The day I head home will be a day of victory, joy, and celebration because I am with the One who loves me more than anyone. God is good. He is faithful. He is true. He is the rock."

God-given needs are different for men and women, but both are legitimate.

We must thrive versus just survive to have all that God has for us within marriage. These listed below are usual (vs. universal). They are not in order of importance.

Listen to me!
My dear brothers, take note of this: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:19-20).

Like a school bus at the railroad tracks . . .

Stop—what you are doing.

Look—into my eyes.

Listen—carefully, actively, use positive body language, ask good questions, volley in conversation.

Do not cross the "fix-it" line.
She does not want you to fix her problem but to listen to her. Create a safe environment for honest expression. Show compassion. A hug goes a long way. Pray with and for her.

Open up. Let me in.
"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you have become so dear to us" (I Thessalonians 2:8).

I feel connected when I am "*in the know*."

What was your day like?

The usefulness of "couch time" and date nights is extremely important.

What are some of your goals and dreams for the future?

What is God teaching you right now?

What are some things you are currently praying about?

What are some things that I can pray for you?

Encourage me.
"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13).

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

Words are wonderful! They are oxygen for the soul.
"She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all" (Proverbs 31:27-29).

Phone calls from work, just to say, "Hi, I am thinking about you."

Messages on the kitchen counter before you leave for the day.

Public compliments that lift her up in front of others.

Expressions of gratitude, thankfulness for meals, laundry, household chores, etc.

Praise in front of the kids and others.

Cheers for your spouse. Be her #1 cheerleader.

Action is awesome.
"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies" (Ephesians 5:25,28).

Help around the house.

Help with the kids.

Help with the little things.

St. Therese of Lisieux suggests that we "miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing it all for love."

Give me the freedom to be me.
"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: he will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun" (Psalm 37:5-6).

The need to grow beyond the role of wife and mother.

Time to pursue energizing activities like exercise and hobbies.

Time to build relationships with other women.

Opportunities to use my spiritual gifts and talents.

Honor me.
"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7).

Why did you marry me?

What is my love language?

What are my likes and dislikes?

What are my fears and insecurities?

Make me a priority.
"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Keep your promises.

Act intentionally.

Date nights: money spent here is seen as an investment.

What does God mean by "one flesh"?

Care about me.
"After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as

Christ does the church" (Ephesians 5:29).

Who will care for my soul?

Help me with accountability.

Take time to be refreshed spiritually, (quiet time, retreats, etc.)

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

I thrive when I know you respect me!

Teamwork and joint decision making, makes for living as one.

Dream of me.
"Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you" (Song of Solomon 4:4-7).

I don't need to be the most beautiful woman in the world as long as I'm the most beautiful woman in the world to you.

No other fantasies.

Appropriate behavior with other women.

Revive the romance with date nights, get-a-ways, etc.

Lead me spiritually.
"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

Be a model for me to follow.

Live with integrity.

Pursue Christ above all.

Be active in the spiritual formation of our family.

Pray together.

Family devotions together, etc.

Kristen Sauder: Previous Further Still Ministries Radio Talk Show Host, Bible study leader, and author. Marriage Retreat Presentation

They both still have their lives apart
as well as a life together.
They both still have their separate
ways to find.
But a marriage made in heaven
is one where a man and a woman
become more rightly themselves
together
than the chances are either of them
could ever have managed
to become alone.

Frederick Buechner
1926

Making Marriage a Rewarding Relationship

A Marriage Can Succeed if We Work at It

Elven and Joyce Smith

Elven and Joyce Smith are Navigator staff members and co-authors of *Two Become One, Bible Studies on Marriage.* This is a related article.

It is always striking how many people approach marriage thinking that if they simply do what comes naturally, everything will work out.

Unfortunately, we are naturally self-centered. We tend to orient everything toward pleasing ourselves. A marriage, and any other personal relationship, will succeed when we work at it with the right knowledge and understanding. The attention will not always be on ourselves.

The following is an excellent verse to memorize and pray over daily:

> "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

The Voice

James Dobson says, "That one Philippian verse contains more wisdom than most marriage manuals combined. If heeded, it could virtually eliminate divorce from the catalog of human experience."

Our faults can cause confrontation, and the closer the relationship, the easier confrontations come. And the more confrontations we have, the more we tend to justify ourselves and not see the other person's point of view. Pride steps in.

The Voice

We especially like the Living Bible's version of Ephesians 4:2. We think it is a great memory verse, "Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love".

All married couples face the same basic problem areas. Because of their personalities and backgrounds some people adjust and adapt more easily; but, nevertheless, we must learn to work through these difficulties, so that over the years they become steppingstones rather than stumbling blocks. Let us examine some of the stepping-stones to a good marriage.

Right expectations.
It is amazing how few couples talk seriously, either before or after marriage, about what they expect to receive when married. Perhaps even fewer talk about what is needed to strengthen their marriages so they will succeed. A good exercise for married couples is to ask each other, "Is this really what you thought it would be? Are your expectations being fulfilled?"

Unmet expectations can become frustrations—frustrations can cause a marriage partner to be unhappy and discouraged. We can develop inward bitterness because marriage is not doing for us what we thought it would.

Scripture warns us. "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:15). Almost always this bitterness is a result of our expectations not being met.

If our expectations rest only in one another, we will have trouble. David wrote, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him" (Psalm 62:5). No one person can meet all our expectations.

Acceptance.
Knowing God accepts us—that he loves us despite what we do—gives us a sense of security, worth, and well-being. The same is true in marriage. We need to feel accepted and hear our marriage partner communicate this acceptance to us verbally and often.

The alternative to acceptance is condemnation, which we cannot live under. We know how relieved our hearts become: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). So, let us be sure we do not cause our spouses to feel condemned.

Ask God to be gracious to you and your spouse and covenant with him, vowing never to say anything to or about the other that would appear belittling, or make each other the butt of a joke. He will allow you to maintain that vow through the years.

Openness to change.
When Jesus met the invalid at the pool in Jerusalem, he asked him: "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6). It may seem a foolish question. He had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

Possibly, he did not want to change. I know of people who are aware of problems in their life, and yet they refuse to change, for whatever reason.

But life is always changing, and we need to change with it. When a young man and woman get married, it is a new experience. They begin to adapt and to overcome the difficulties and to sort things out, but then a child comes along. Their life changes all over again.

Then another child comes. Soon the children begin going to school, bringing more changes. One by one they grow up and leave, changing their parents' lives again. In the meantime, of course, the family has moved two or three times. That is the way of life, and it takes adaptability to live in it.

Good communication.
Good marriages take a lot of communication. If asked to name their greatest need in marriage, most wives would say they need more time with their husbands just to talk, not about facts, but about how each of them feels, what

they are thinking, where they are going, how the children are, etc. We must make room for those times when we can just talk face to face.

"Speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) includes the aspect of right timing. There may be some things you should leave unsaid now because your objective is the other person's welfare. Or maybe you know that the two of you have conflicting opinions about an issue—strong opinions—and you do not want to cause irritations. Love can live with that.

But the Bible has a lot to say about settling differences promptly. "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26). Otherwise, you are frustrated.

That is why Jesus spoke these words about quickly taking the initiative in reconciliation with your spouse or friend: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). He does not say it will be easy, but we can learn to work at it.

Be careful that your communication in this area is up-building and not destructive. Most of us know our weaknesses, and it can be frustrating for the other person to whittle away at us because of them. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

Tenderheartedness.
The Pharisees asked Jesus if divorce were lawful, and Jesus answered by quoting in Genesis the account of God's creation of man and woman, and his intension that they be united in one flesh. "Therefore," Jesus said, "what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6).

The Pharisees countered by asking why Moses allowed for a certificate of divorce. Moses did it, Jesus answered, "because, your hearts were hard" (Matthew 19:8).

Hardheartedness is not sudden but gradual eating away at us over time. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Ephesians 4:31). What are we to do instead? Paul said in the next verse, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you."

Fulfillment in sex.
Examining the Scriptures will show that God's primary purpose for sex is the

uniting of husband and wife as one. His second intent is their pleasure, and the third, their procreation.

Sex is beautiful, and God gives the subject one entire book in the Bible, Song of Songs. He must think it is important; important enough that a husband and wife should talk about it together to discuss how they feel, what they think, what works for them and what does not.

> "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

Paul makes it clear that we are to provide enjoyment in sex to our marriage partner. So, we should learn how to become romantic lovers.

The Voice

In the next chapter, "Marriage for Life" focuses on the story of King Solomon and his Shulammite bride as written in the Song of Songs. There is much more to be gained about loving and understanding our spouse's longings far beyond the sex act alone. Take the time to read their love story where they care for one another by giving dignity and respect to their beloved.

Minister together.
The husband and wife should agree on the extent and kind of ministry involvement they should have, recognizing that each of them is an individual with different spiritual gifts. We should not expect each other to do what we are not gifted to do but share our individual giftedness to work together for God's glory.

Smith, Elven and Joyce, *Two Become One, The Marriage Bible Study,*
Navigator Staff Member

My Wife Wants Me to Be the Leader in Our Marriage

What does that look like?

Jack and Carole Mayhall

This husband-wife team shares openly and honestly about roles and responsibilities, exciting sex, and more. In his-her style, they speak up on navigating rough seas in your marriage by making the right choices and love working with individuals to help them grow in their Christian life.

While not hard and fast rules, the following principles are certainly applicable to a husband who wants to be the loving leader of his family. With the help of God, it is possible.

How well do you know your wife?

Take the following quiz:

- What is your wife's greatest concern right now?
- What is her greatest need?
- What is her wildest dream?
- What causes her pain?
- What new vista would she like to explore?

Can you answer these questions with certainty? If not, you do not, at the moment, know your wife. And if you do not know her, it will be very difficult to look out for her welfare. Perhaps she needs physical rest or needs to pray with you. She may need to be noticed because she has been feeling like a part of your landscape that you are not seeing.

You may be saying, "Whatever she needs, I can't afford it." However, if you want to be God's kind of husband, you cannot afford not to know in order to try to meet her needs.

Maintain clear communication.

Paul tells us that husbands are to love their wives in the same way as Christ loved the church. Who took the initiative in communicating, Christ or the church? Christ took the initiative to open doors of communication with his

people. If you want a happy wife, take responsibility for communicating on a deeper level with her; let her know what is going on in your innermost person.

> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

When some of these principles of communication come up during seminars and marriage retreats, it is a common complaint from wives that their husbands fail to initiate communication and are reluctant to cooperate when they suggest it. Many husbands would be aghast if they were told that they were disobeying God in their lack of initiative and cooperation in this area.

Make sound decisions.
Good decisions take thought and work, but they are absolutely vital. One of the tremendous assets of being in touch with God through Jesus Christ is that he will help us in making decisions. The Lord has promised to instruct us and guide us in the way that we should go through the help of the Holy Spirit.

> "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8).

If we are listening to understand—hearing with our heart—we will be able to put ourselves in our wives' shoes and take seriously their thoughts and feelings about decisions. Tragically, some Christian men feel that if they have simply listened to their wives' words, they have adequately considered their viewpoints. Then they proceed to make decisions independently.

But God calls us to be one in marriage. To be "one flesh" is to be subject to one another, to love, to prefer, and to look out for the best interests of our mates. How can this be done when we take the attitude, "Thanks for your opinion; now I'll do what I want to do?"

> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

It is the responsibility of the husband as decision maker to love and honor his wife as he is called to do. See that life's major and minor decisions are thought through and resolved together. As head of the home, he is responsible for these decisions. As a lover, he will rarely—if ever—make a decision that is not mutually agreed upon.

> "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7).

Encourage your wife's gifts.
What are your wife's strengths? Do you know what she enjoys and does well? Are you encouraging her to develop and use these strengths in whatever way God wants?

God made a man and a woman to "fit together," to be more effective together than either one could be alone. Unfortunately, many men feel threatened by their wives' abilities. Instead of figuring out how they can fit together, this kind of man suddenly starts demanding so much in the home that his wife has no energy left to use other gifts—spiritual gifts—that God has given her.

> "The Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

If a wife feels stifled and boxed in, if she does not feel she is living up to her God-given abilities, it may be because the husband is not noticing her capabilities and encouraging her accordingly.

Seek and take responsibility.
Husbands need to take responsibility for their actions. Believe it or not, there will be times when you are 100 percent wrong. Now what are you going to do? One thing only: Say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. I will endeavor never to repeat this mistake. Will you forgive me?" Are you man enough to say this? A good leader is willing to accept responsibility—when he is right and when he is wrong. Especially when he is wrong!

Leadership does not mean a general commanding his army or a master in charge of his slave. Leadership is taking seriously our God-given responsibility, as husbands to care for our wives and to lead them in love toward the goals that God has chosen for both of you.

Mayhall, Jack and Carole, *Marriage Takes More than Love*

The need for a head follows from the idea
that marriage is permanent. . .
When there is a real disagreement, what is to happen?. . .
They cannot decide by a majority vote. . .
If marriage is permanent, one or other party
must in the last resort,
have the power of deciding family policy. . .
If there must be a head, why the man?
Well, firstly, is there
any very serious wish that it should be the woman?. . .
As far as I can see, even a woman who wants
to be the head of her own house does not usually admire
the same state of things
when she finds it going on next door.

C. S. Lewis
1898-1963

5

Eyes for You Only

The Voice

Certainly, I am dating myself, but I can remember when I was a teenager, the Country Western singer, Johnny Cash, came out with a hit song: "Because You're Mine, I Walk the Line." I guess the implication is that he was so much in love with his woman that nothing was ever going to take his eyes off her because she was on his mind day and night.

The song has a great tune, and I loved the catchy phrases, but many things can distract spouses from keeping their eyes focused on their mate! Men are very visual, and their eyes are prone to wonder, but women can struggle in this area too. Married couples must keep their eyes in check, or they will quickly find themselves being tempted. Couples should be doing what they can do to keep their spouse's eyes focused on them, this includes making sure one another's physical needs are met.

Wives demonstrate your undivided attention to your husband and his activities. Focus and work to become a better wife, not necessarily a better housewife. Actively engage in becoming his partner, supporting outside interest and after workplace responsibilities. Your husband wants to know that he is your number one; praise and encouragement ought to be coming from you. There is a saying that goes: "If you don't, someone else will!"

When our youngest daughter, Angel, started dating Carlos, who is now her husband, I remember how much he loved automobiles, racer bikes, and anything that moved. Angel not only knew the make, but also the style, the size engine, the manufacturer, and so on. She was able to have

a knowledgeable conversation on just about any car. Now that is an example of a wise woman who had her eyes wide open all the time. Carlos's nickname for Angel, who happens to be a redhead, was "Testarossa," which is a type of Ferrari which means, "Redhead!" He still has the license plate with the name, redhead, hanging in their garage today.

While it is important for men to have a companion, but women desire someone with whom to communicate. Men can become very distracted and involved in their jobs and outside interests, but a wise man will pay specific attention to his wife's verbal needs. When a woman does not get the attention she needs, she may feel neglected and taken for granted which could cause resentment. A husband should work to meet his wife's needs and nurture his marriage by establishing a regular date night, to just talk and focus his attention on her.

I remember when Tom and I were engaged, he spent a semester in Pensacola, Florida, working a co-op job. He called me one night to tell me while he was walking, a lady came up to him and made it clear that she was not seeking directions. It was so encouraging that he wanted to share his story with me and talk about what happened. Honestly, I did not have any misgivings about Tom's character, but after that conversation, I had a heartfelt conformation that our values were perfectly aligned.

The Bible's Song of Solomon is full of examples of King Solomon keeping his eyes focused on his Shulammite bride. It is a great read to better understand God's approach to sex and romance. The next few pages will help you understand King Solomon's love for his bride and her love for him.

Every spouse desires their mate to be especially tuned into their specific needs and wants. This chapter gives a few ideas that will help you do just that and will help you become a supportive team player.

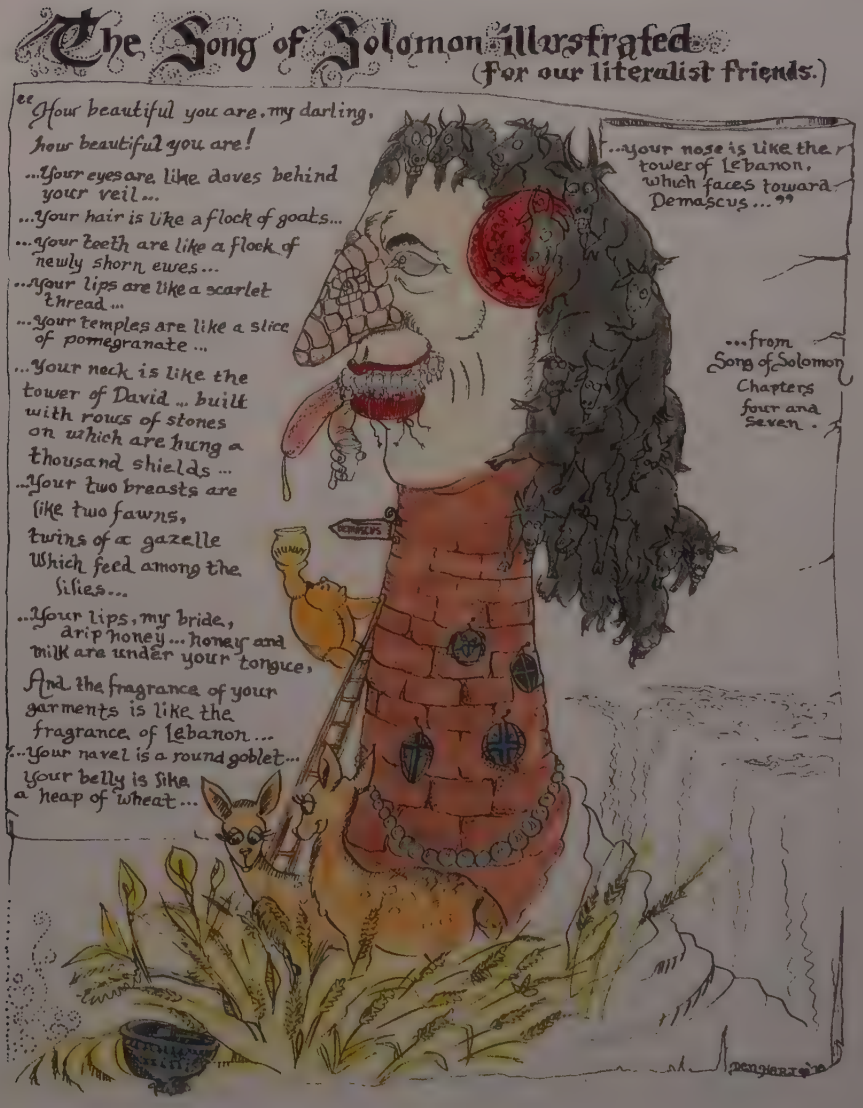
He

How beautiful
You are
My darling!
Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes are doves.

She

How handsome
you are,
my beloved!
Oh, how charming!
And our bed is verdant.

Song of Solomon 1:15-16


The Song of Solomon Illustrated
(For our literalist friends.)
"How beautiful you are, my darling,
how beautiful you are!
...Your eyes are like doves behind your veil...
...Your hair is like a flock of goats...
...Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes...
...Your lips are like a scarlet thread...
...Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate...
...Your neck is like the tower of David... built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields...
...Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies...
...Your lips, my bride, drip honey... honey and milk are under your tongue,
And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon...
...Your navel is a round goblet...
your belly is like a heap of wheat...
...your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which faces toward Damascus..."
...from Song of Solomon Chapters four and seven.

The Song of Songs is full of idioms used in Solomon's day to describe deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual satisfaction that God created to be enjoyed in marriage. Cartoon Artist, Den Hart

Your neck is like the tower of David,
Built with elegance,
On it hang a thousand shields,
All of them shields of warriors.
Your two breasts are like two fawns.
Like twin fawns of a gazelle
That browse among the lilies.
Until the day breaks
And the shadows flee,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh
And to the hill of incense.
All beautiful you are, my darling'
There is no flaw in you.

Song of Solomon 4:4-7

My lover is mine and I am his;
He browses among the
Lilies.
Until the day breaks
And the shadows flee,
Turn, my lover,
and be like a gazelle
or like a young stag
on the rugged hills.

Song of Solomon 2:16-17

Idiom Use in Solomon's Day

Sandy Baker

Sandy has appeared previously with her husband, Tom. Most importantly she is Tom's helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led, *Thoroughly Equipped,* a Women's 21-month Discipleship Curriculum several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the China orphanage/adoption arena one of her most humbling experiences. Together she and Tom do marriage counseling to engaged and married couples.

The Song of Solomon makes great use of hyperbole from the ancient Near Eastern culture to describe the feelings of both King Solomon and his Shulammite bride. Poetic animal and plant imagery highlight the characteristics of each lover.

Some assume that the words suggest how the singer felt about the woman, not how she looked. Thus, a tower-like nose or neck might suggest that he was in awe of her and not imply anything about the appearance of these physical features.

The King extolled the Shulammite's beauty from her feet upward to her head. His passions were awakened. Perhaps she was dancing before her husband. In Song of Solomon 7:8 Solomon uses a poetic expression to fulfill his sexual longing for the Shulammite and she was confident of his love for her as well.

Below is a description of some of the poetic imageries popular in that day.

The term "flock" is used repeatedly since the nation's economy was agricultural, involving flocks and herds. Shepherding patterns intertwine the expressions of love. The Shulammite looked for her lover "at midday" because he would be resting with his flock in the heat of the day. He responded with advice to follow the footsteps of the flock. (Song of Solomon 1:8)

The Nubian ibex, wild mountain "goats" having long recurved horns, had glossy black hair still found in this area today. (Song of Solomon 1:8; 4:1; 6:5)

The whiteness of newly washed wool from "sheep" served as a description of her teeth, perfectly matching and evenly set. (Song of Solomon 4:2; 6:6)

The "dove" personified innocence, and purity which described the young maiden as a term of endearment. The Shulammite quoted him as thus

addressing her. She imagined the king urging her to come and alluded to the shy nature of doves as they rested high in the clefts of large rocks. (Song of Solomon 1:15; 5:2; 2:4)

The shiny feathers of sleek, black "ravens" are used to describe the royal hair of King Solomon. (Song of Solomon 5:11)

These three designations of deer were found commonly in poetry of this period. "Gazelles" were graceful and thus a symbol of feminine beauty. Each lover used this analogy for the other. She saw him as a nimble "stag." Her breasts evoked his memory of young "fawns" feeding. (Song of Solomon 2:2,17; 4:5; 7:3)

The comparison of the Shulammite with the king's "mare" was intended as a high compliment, since Solomon introduced to the kingdom the finest thoroughbred Egyptian horses, strong and carefully groomed. (Song of Solomon 1:19)

The abundance of "jackals" and "foxes" which were crafty and swift, were used to denote apprehension that someone would thwart the expressions of the couple's love for one another. (Song of Solomon 2:15)

Symbolically, the "lion" is seen as a threat, stalking its prey and the "leopard" is highly intelligent and treacherous. Both lived in mountainous areas. (Song of Solomon 4:8)

The Myrrh Bush produces a sweet-smelling sap mentioned in the Song of Songs as alluring Solomon to his bride as well as being used as a sacred anointing oil.

The Date Palm was a treasured tree in the ancient Near East. It was sometimes associated with fertility goddesses and is compared with the stature of a woman.

The Henna Shrub are fragrant white blossoms growing to the height of 12 feet. Leaves were made into paste and used to color hair and nails as well as the manes and tails of horses.

Wood from Lebanon are Cedar trees symbolizing holiness, truth and perseverance.

Incense is the tree that exudes clear resin from incisions in the bark, hardening into small yellow beads with strong odor. A symbol of religious fervor.

The Woman's Study Bible, Thomas Nelson
Starting Place Study Bible, An Introductory Exploration of Studying God's Word, Zondervan

Love is...

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NKJV)
"Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy,
does not parade itself, is not puffed up.
Love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own,
is not provoked and thinks no evil.
Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in truth.
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,
and endures all things."

Love is patient. Love responds to human need. Love expresses itself.
Love is not concerned with self. Love dies daily to self.

Love has patience with imperfect people.

> ". . . be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires"(James 1:19-20).

Love is kind.
Love is active in doing good. Love expresses itself. Kindness draws people to us whereas criticism and harshness pushes them away.

> ". . . God's kindness leads you toward repentance" (Romans 2:4).

Love does not envy.
Love is non-possessive and wants others to get ahead, however, jealousy is a fear of being displaced by another person or thing. It may be a vain imagination. It is self-focused and self-centered.

> "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Love does not parade itself.
Love shows by being a humble servant. An arrogant heart is full of self-importance, is showy, and prideful.

Love does not behave rudely.
Love displays good manners and courtesy. Often, we act unbecomingly based on our mood.

Love does not seek its own.
Unselfishness denies its own intentions on the behalf of another. Love shows more concern for what we can do for others rather than what they can do for us.

> "Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interest of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Love is not provoked.
Love is not easily irritated and is truly graceful under pressure. We should show love by having the godly character quality of self-control, then no temptation will overtake us.

> "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Love thinks no evil.
Love does not keep a record of wrongdoing. We should not hold onto bitterness. We should forgive one another by not bringing up past hurtful acts and failures and do not replay bitter thoughts over and over in our minds. We should let it go!

Love does not rejoice in iniquity.
Love aggressively advertises the good. We show love to others by stimulating them to love and to do good deeds as we encourage them and support them.

> "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

Love bears all things.
Love protects and defends—regardless of how it looks. Even if suffering, it should be for doing what is right.

> "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:17).

Love believes all things.
Love believes the best—rather than assuming the worst. No matter what others have done, Christians should trust in God's sovereign care.

> "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Love hopes all things.
Love never gives up. Hope is based on Jesus Christ, and in him believers will not be disappointed.

> "As the Scriptures says, anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (Romans 10:11).

It will come to pass.

> "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Love endures all things.
Love perseveres and remains loyal. In enduring difficult times, we show love as Jesus did—enduring the cross, despising the shame. But for the joy that was set before him . . .

> "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Love never fails!
And above all things, have fervent love for one another.
"Above all, love each other deeply, because
love covers over a multitude of sins"
(1 Peter 4:8).

Love has its source in God, for love is the very essence of his being.

Kay Arthur

Kay Author was born January 11, 1933. She and her husband, Jack, co-founded Precept Ministries International. Precept ministries is an Inductive Bible Study Method teaching on national radio, television, and podcasts the practical approach to studying the Bible, which has helped millions of people discover the truth of God's Word for themselves over the past five decades. Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 she states: "We are to live on every word that comes from the moth of God." Like manna, it is our daily sustenance.

Energize Your Spouse

Kristen Sauder

Kristen Sauder graduated from Moody Bible Institute in 1991 with her husband, Kurt, launching them into a life of disciple-making and pouring their lives into people for the great passion of Kristen's life: Jesus. She was not only a wife, and mother but also, a speaker, writer, and leader with Further Still Ministries which she founded with her husband. Kristen was 45 years old when she passed on January 22, 2014 after a courageous fight with cancer. "Because of Jesus I have been set free. The day I head home will be a day of victory, joy, and celebration because I am with the One who loves me more than anyone. God is good. He is faithful. He is true. He is the rock."

You have 1,440 minutes every day. Can you spare five minutes a day for your spouse? It does not take much time for your little gestures to go a long way. Gestures have no ulterior motive, other than to express love and to let your spouse know that you are thinking about them.

The Ten Second Energizer.
A ten-second hello or good-bye, or a hug or kiss for a full ten seconds when leaving or returning will energize your spouse. It does not sound like a long time, but at first you will have to count to yourself, 1 . . . 1000, etc. It is also longer than most of us usually stay embraced for a hello or a good-bye.

The Positive Statement Energizer.
You can energize with these positives daily: compliment, encourage, praise or a thank you. Say at least one of these in front of your children, family, or friends. No negatives, please. If you slip, it takes at least five positives to undo it.

Touch Energizes.
Touch whenever possible. Hold hands in the car, in church, while walking, while watching TV or a movie. While eating, let your knee or foot drift over and touch your spouse. Even if you are just passing through the room, touch your spouse on the shoulder or give them a little pat on your way through.

Words Energize.
Say "I love you" at least three times a day, take your spouse in your arms and say, "Have I told you lately that I love you?" even if you just told them an hour ago.

Thoughtful Requests Energize.
Make thoughtful requests instead of selfish demands. People feel used when

no consideration is shown for their little sacrifices. Even when they have agreed to help, they can still come away feeling resentful. Demands serve a shortsighted purpose—trying to get the other person to do what you want with no regard for their time or for them personally.

Unexpected Gestures Energize.
Performing small and unexpected gestures or surprising your spouse, keep your marriage energized. We do not stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing. Examples: hide a note; cut out interesting, funny, or suggestive headlines from a magazine or newspaper. Be creative!

Kristen Sauder, Previous Further Still Ministries Radio Talk Show host, Bible study leader, and author. Marriage Retreat Presentation

I will take a heart
whose nature is to beat for me alone.
And fill it up with you,
make all your joy and pain my own.
No matter how deep a valley you go through,
I will go there with you.
And I will give myself to love
the way LOVE gave itself for me.
And climb with you to mountain tops
or swim a raging sea.
To the place where one heart is made from two,
I will go there with you.

"Go There with You"
Song lyrics by
Steven Curtis Chapman

The Power of Encouragement

Through Words of Affirmation

Matt and Lisa Jacobson

Matt and Lisa Jacobson are the co-hosts of the popular Faithful Life podcast and authors of the bestselling books, *100 Ways to Love Your Wife* and *100 Ways to Love Your Husband.* He is the founder and teacher at FaithfulMan.com, an online social media community focusing on the topics of marriage, parenting, and Biblical teaching. Lisa is the founder and host of Club31Women.com.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

Marriage is a team sport, and all of us need occasional pats on the back from our teammate.

The Bible says: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). This verse reminds us that the words we speak can and should be beautiful offerings to those we love.

All of us have the power to enrich the lives of our loved ones. Sometimes when we feel uplifted and secure, we find it easy to speak words of encouragement and hope. Other times, when we are discouraged or tired, we can scarcely summon the energy to uplift ourselves, much less anyone else. But words have meaning. Words can hurt and words can heal. I would bet that you have experienced both kinds. If you are at a loss about what to say or wonder if it will actually make a difference to speak with kindness, trust that it will. Words of affirmation have the power to enrich your personal life, that of your spouse, as well as enrich your marriage.

God intends that we speak words of kindness, wisdom, and truth, affirming others, no matter our circumstances, no matter our emotions. Speaking words of affirmation do not always come naturally; but a spouse has an incredible opportunity to communicate in ways that will dramatically influence his or her spouse forever.

The spoken words from our spouse are sometimes needed to override the voices in our heads. These voices may never be silenced unless they are replaced by loving spoken words of affirmation. Voices that tear down and

diminish can be convincing, because your voice is powerful and far more important to your spouse's heart than anything this world has to say.

Surprisingly enough however, when you start affirming your spouse's great importance and value to you and your family, you will discover that the return in positive affirmation is reciprocated far beyond any expectation. Your spouse's eyes are fixed on you, because you are speaking "apples of gold in settings of silver." Who would want to look anywhere else?

Contentment is the byproduct of words of affirmation.
Successful marriages are more than finding the right person; successful marriages happen when two people become the right "persons." The more we affirm and encourage our spouse, the more we will notice a character change within ourselves. We should be more concerned with our character than our reputation because our character is who we really are, while our reputation is merely what others think we are. Powerful life-changing words are words of affirmation and encouragement.

Women, encouraging words to your husband should become part of your memory bank. Below are a few affirming phrases worth giving some thought.

The weight of marriage can sometimes bare down on us. Ladies, give your husbands a lift through this statement: *"Saying yes to marrying you is the best decision I ever made."*

Men love companionship if they are running to the hardware store, to Staples or across country. They love a teammate. Does your husband know there is nowhere you would rather be than with him? *"I'd go anywhere with you."*

Women are known as the talkers in the family, but sometimes men need someone to listen. Given the chance a wife may hear stories not heard before such as shared dreams or burdens he carried of which she was unaware. Be determined to be the listener. *"I'm here if you ever need someone to listen."*

Women are not always good sleepers. Our minds start going over all the fears and concerns that have been stuffed down during the day. When I nudge my husband at night, he knows exactly what to do. He wraps his arms around me. That one simple act calms my body, eases my mind, and helps me to fall asleep. Tell your husband: *"When you hold me tight, I feel safe."*

Compliment your man for who he is: he is simply a guy, who gets up early, works hard and makes a thousand right choices every day. He is just living out an honest, good life. Aren't your kids blessed to have such a man to look up to in

this fallen world in which we live? Thank him for being someone your children can respect as their dad. Tell him: *"Our kids have a strong role model in you."*

Men, your wife will never forget words of gratitude and faithfulness. Below are some directed toward women.

Virtually every wife and mother feel as if they are constantly meeting the needs of others, because they are! Men are not usually too expressive, but all women appreciate affirming words: *"You give a lot, and I deeply appreciate how much you give."*

Every husband knows that without his wife, he would not be the man he is. However, his wife is not a mind reader: tell her! Let her know the powerful, pivotal role she plays in the man you have become and the man you desire to be because of her. *"You make me want to be a better man."*

In the early years of our marriage with small kids as well as in later years, wives do a whole lot of giving and taking care of others with no reciprocation, because that is how God designed women. Even so, the oft thankless job of "mom" should not be thankless. Husbands should remind wives that year-in, year-out their faithfulness adds up to something beautiful, something that will matter deeply in the lives of those God has entrusted to her. *"Our kids are so fortunate to have you as their mother."*

Wives need to hear from husbands how much they love her—not with some flippant, offhand, throwaway comment, but a message that comes straight from their hearts. Husbands should take their wives into their arms. Husbands should look directly into the eyes of their wives and then tell her how beautiful they are.

Your wife really is your other half. And in God's grand plan, you were incomplete without her.

Telling your wife *"You complete me"* demonstrates that you recognize and value her significant place and role in your heart and life.

These are just a few examples of ways to become more affirming, but once you develop a mindset of encouraging your spouse, words of affirmation will begin to come to mind more easily. The growing process should continue for the rest of your life. There are many more words of encouragement than these your spouse needs to hear. Be open. Be creative!

Jacobson, Matt and Lisa, *100 Words of Affirmation your Wife Needs to Hear and 100 Words of Affirmation your Husband Needs to Hear,* Faith Family Ministries, Revell Publisher

A Prayer of Commitment

Dr. Emerson Eggerrichs

Dr. Emerson Eggerrichs, Pastor of Trinity Church in East Lansing, Michigan has been counseling along with his wife, Sarah, for three decades. He is a communications expert and author of the NY Times bestseller, *Love and Respect*, which was a Platinum and Book of the Year Award, selling over two million copies.

Dear Father,

I need you, Lord. I cannot love perfectly without you, but I know you hear me when I ask you for help to be a better more respecting spouse. I open my heart to you, Father. I will make every effort not be fearful or angry at you or my spouse. I see myself and my spouse in a whole new light. I will appreciate my spouse as different, not wrong. Lord, fill my heart with love and reverence for you.

Ultimately, this is about you and me. It is not about my spouse. Thank you for this enlightenment. My greatest reward comes from doing this unto you. Prepare me this day for those moments of conflict. I especially ask you to put love in my heart when I feel unloved, mistreated, or taken for granted. There is no credit for loving when it is easy.

At this moment, I believe you hear me, Lord, and I anticipate your response. I thank you in advance for helping me take this step. I believe you will reward me, and I believe this touches your heart as I do this unto you. It is between you and me. I am a true believer, Lord.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.

Eggerichs, Emerson, Dr., *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs*

6

Struggles are Not Unique

The Voice

As newlyweds, Tom and I struggled with seemingly small things. Because I sometimes become emotional quickly, it is difficult for Tom to understand my behavior with his logical way of thinking. It can be so easy to misunderstand one another. Although there seemed to be no immediate clear resolution, we finally learned that humor would take you far before the conversation gets blown out of proportion. The best advice I can give today is that when struggles appear: Communicate! Communicate! Communicate! Honest communication is the most valuable tool, but the most difficult thing to do when you find yourself in the midst of a disagreement.

Part of the issue is that God has designed men and women to function differently for a reason. He wants us to work together to meet our needs and to collaborate with each other for the best result and the greater good. It takes more than love for a marriage to last a lifetime. It takes commitment, courage, and will power, but, most importantly, prayer.

In today's world, walking away and seeking divorce rather than working through conflicts has become too commonplace. When conflict is not dealt with properly, it can cause a great deal of hurt for couples and their children. Often the pain is so great, we give up rather than work toward a resolution. We want the immediate pain to go away. But it is important that we resolve the conflict and understand the root issues that caused the problem in the first place. Unfortunately, many start over with a new

marriage partner only to repeat the same mistakes. To promote a positive change, we need a new normal, a changed philosophy, and a different way of viewing ourselves and our spouse. If you sense things are getting worse, seek advice from a counselor, pastor, or another married couple; don't wait for your marriage to be in shambles.

Develop the habit of asking God to help you solve your problems. Pray aloud together to hear one another's heart. Squelch pride before it becomes a stronghold. Submit yourself to God.

> *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1).*

If issues become a power struggle, or if we begin to think that our way is better than that of our spouse's, we are going to experience a great deal of conflict. But if we begin to recognize the value and legitimacy of our spouse's comments, we can take our differences and blend them together combining the best of both. Compromising our differences to create the greater strength, creates the better outcome and the stronger unit. Humility and willingness to compromise are key in problem solving.

We must realize that no matter how depressing or irritating our spouse might look at any given moment, how we choose to respond is our responsibility.

> *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).*

Sin is selfishness at the core. Satan is real! This world is truly terribly broken. That is why we need a Savior. Reading further, you will begin to understand from where our problems stem. But no matter what happens, no matter what the calamity, no matter what circumstances arise in your marriage, each of us can choose to persevere through it. The truth is, working through these trials makes our marriage stronger; stronger than we ever thought possible. Keep the eternal flame burning.

Financial Struggles in Marriage

Sandy Baker

Sandy has appeared previously with her husband, Tom. Most importantly she is his helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led "*Thoroughly Equipped*" a 21-month Discipleship Curriculum several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the China orphanage/adoption arena one of her most humbling experiences. Together she and Tom offer marriage counseling to engaged and married couples.

Financial planning is not usually discussed in marriage books, but in today's time, it is important to at least understand basic information about finances when planning to marry. Most of us only have what we learned from our parents and other relatives regarding money. I am so thankful my dad, an uneducated laborer, possessed great wisdom about how to handle money, save, and spend wisely. I learned by his example. When debt creeps into our lives, insecurity sets in and causes havoc within our marriage.

Today with pre-approved credit-card offers arriving in the mail, it is so enticing to overindulge and before you know it, you are head over heels in debt. Most people do not even consider the fact that if credit cards are not paid in full at the end of each month, the interest rate carried from month to month can run as much as 30%. Most couples we have counseled did not know the interest rate on their cards. Bargains go by the wayside quickly when credit cards are not paid in full at the end of each month.

You may be paying the required minimum amount monthly, but the debt continues to increase. When the maximum charge is reached your card can no longer be used, but you still owe the debt incurred. For women particularly, mounting debt becomes a great concern: How do we feed the children, pay the rent, what do we do with overdraft notices? All these things cause friction in the household. Financial security is a top priority, especially among women.

Many couples are overwhelmed with the realization that they are as much as $30,000 in debt. There is little understanding why they do not qualify for a loan when wanting to purchase a house or something with a significant price tag. Your credit score becomes very important as assessments are made about your personal credit. Many people are instantly disqualified, often without understanding why.

It takes wisdom and discipline to control your "wants verses needs." If you continually spend more than you bring in, you will eventually be in debt.

Learn to prepare for the long term by developing goals to enhance your future. Small sacrifices now offer a greater quality of life, and a more stress-free environment moving forward.

To avoid mounting debt, never spend more than you take in, and make it a habit to save regularly. Little by little, put cash in the bank to maintain an emergency fund to handle unexpected expenses, such as car break downs, medical bills, unplanned household expenses, layoffs, or loss of jobs. An emergency fund is necessary both for stability when handling unexpected needs as they occur and to help maintain a calm household environment.

On the other hand, God encourages us to lend a helping hand to the poor and hungry. If you pitch in to help people in great need, even though your contribution may be small, you will receive the greater blessing. *Sixteen of the thirty-nine parables of Jesus deal with wealth. In Scripture more references are made to money than salvation.* Jesus dealt with money because money matters to people. God expects his children to use the wealth they receive from him to bless others and bring him glory.

> "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Another important thing to remember is that your children are watching how you handle finances, emergences, and generosity. They are learning from you. What are you teaching them?

> "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

When Tom and I first got married money was very tight. Having a budget was imperative. We developed an envelope system (antiquated today) where a separate envelope was used for the different expenditures we were facing. Food, gas, rent, school, and church were the ones I remember. Believe me, when the food envelope ran out, we ate beans and cornbread! Entertainment consisted of having people over to the apartment, which was Tom's grandfathers converted shed off an alley way in the Westend of Louisville. We were careful because we knew debt would be detrimental to our long-term plans.

Dave Ramsey, a Christian businessman, learned about finances the hard way. He made a mistake that millions of Americans make every day. He got too far into debt to get out which almost cost him everything he owned. Today he is a leading speaker on financial planning.

He learned the importance of communicating with his spouse about money. As you make joint decisions about how to spend your income, you improve

the dynamics of your relationship. Worrying about money and living from paycheck to paycheck causes stressful moments and drains your marriage of the joy of a peaceful future. Studies show that financial security is an important desire among women planning to marry.

Dave Ramsey has grown tired of seeing adults on the brink of suicide, widows left with a legacy of debt, children who are taught by example that if you want something, go buy it now. He strongly encourages people to get out of debt by developing a plan and giving it priority.

Retirement is not even in the thought process of most newly married couples, understandably, but learning how to avoid accumulating too much debt right from the beginning will help to provide a better quality of life for the future.

Listed below are eight seemingly simple steps to avoid debt, but they are challenging. Dave calls them *Peace Puppies*:

1. Avoid "Stuffitis"—the worship of "stuff."
2. Plant Seeds—give money away to worthy causes.
3. Develop your own "power over purchase."
4. Find where you are naturally gifted—enjoy your work and work hard.
5. Live substantially below your income.
6. Sacrifice now so you can have peace later.
7. Spend less than you make.
8. Beware! The borrower is the servant to the lender.

When learning to deal with money, remember this key Scripture verse:

> "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1).

Before we get too far along in marriage it is a good idea to evaluate your attitude of ownership toward your possessions. The Bible reveals that the Lord has never transferred the ownership of his creation to people, so hold onto your belongings loosely. We came into this world without material possessions and we will leave without material possessions.

Learn from the Parable of the Rich Fool:

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry."' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21)

When we acknowledge God's ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual one. We are stewards of the possessions the Lord has entrusted to us, and our responsibility is to be faithful with what we have been given.

> "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Wealth and Worries

"Still others, like seed sown
among thorns, hear the Word
but the worries of this life, the
deceitfulness of wealth and the
desires for other things come in and
choke the Word, making it unfruitful."

Mark 4:18-19

Ramsey, Dave, *Financial Peace*
Burkett, Larry, *Journey to Financial Freedom*

Sin's Greatest Rebellions

Refusal to Listen and Submit

Dr. Paul David Tripp

Dr. Paul David Tripp was born on November 12, 1950 in Toledo, Ohio. He is a pastor, event speaker, and an award winning, best-selling author. He married his wife, Luella, while still attending college. They have four children and reside in Philadelphia. His mission in his work is to have people realize that the grace of Jesus Christ comes with hope by connecting Christ's power to everyday life.

As I listened to them argue, blame, and graphically recount one another's wrongs, all colored with hurt and anger, a sad thought gripped me. The vast majority of what they needed to hear in order for their relationship to be what God intended for it to be was clearly written in the Bible that they both said they believed. Their marriage was the sad casualty of their street-level unwillingness to listen to God's wisdom and seek the grace he offered to live with one another in light of it.

Consider this one passage loaded with essential relational wisdom.

> "[Live together] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3, ESV).

Think about these wise guidelines for marriage relationships:

with all humility . . . Pride always destroys a relationship. It causes you to feel more entitled and to be more demanding than serving and giving. It drives you to insist on control. It makes you have to be right. It forces others to submit to your lordship. Pride is an anti-relational way of having a relationship. Humility is the Godly way.

and gentleness . . . Treating a person with gentleness makes him or her want to move near you. Responding with gentleness teaches another person that he or she is safe in your care. It is an essential relational bond.

with patience . . . You cannot have a healthy communion with another flawed human being without being willing to wait. If you demand to have things your way, and in your time, you are so busy loving yourself that you have little time left to love the other person.

bearing with one another in love . . . Love requires that you be willing to be forbearing, that is willing to suffer. Why? Because you are in a relationship with a less-than-perfect person, living together in a fallen world. Both you and that person often fail.

eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit . . . Love means unity is more important to you than being right, having your way, and getting what you want. Love rejoices in the fact that God's Spirit in both of you gives you a wonderful platform for unity.

in the bond of peace . . . Love means committing to make peace, not war.

There simply are no more-important relational commitments that you could cite. The husband and wife I mentioned above held this wisdom in their hands but did not listen. Do you?

The Voice

Wow! Reading this article caused me to realize how often I fall short and need to improve how I relate to my husband. It seems that we are doing okay relationally, but in retrospect, as I pause and think about it, I realized that we could use some improvement, even after 55 years of marriage. We should never settle. We should always be seeking to make our marriage the best it can be.

Tripp, Paul David, Dr., *New Morning Mercies,* Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois

Self-Centeredness: Cause of Conflict

Looking Out for Number One

Sandy Baker

Sandy has appeared previously with her husband, Tom. Most importantly she is his helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led "*Thoroughly Equipped*" a 21-month Discipleship Curriculum several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the China orphanage/adoption arena one of her most humbling experiences. Together she and Tom offer marriage counseling to engaged and married couples.

Sin cannot be understood or described without reference to self-centeredness. "The flesh" is self-focused.

> "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from theworld" (1 John 2:16).

Carnality is self-expression on behalf of your own interests.

The self is the unique gift of God to each person, the basic of individuality, the bearer of the divine image. But turned in upon itself, self becomes the source of temptation, the evidence of sin and the obstacle to holiness.

> "Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a deprived mind, so that they do what ought not to be done" (Romans 1:28).

"Every evil practice" can be traced back to the desire to gratify self, whether through envy, boasting, lying, or wisdom that is "earthly, unspiritual, demonic" or by the many other descriptions of ungodliness in human behavior. This mind set ultimately leads to destruction.

> "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice" (James 3:14-16).

Self-centeredness is a product of the will. We choose whether the center of our affections will be self or God. When we trust God with our innermost being, then our will also belongs to him, and his will becomes our motivation. Jesus describes self-denial as that state in which God has center stage.

> "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciples must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'" (Matthew 16:24).

The Women's Study Bible, NIV, Tommy Nelson

My Name is Pride

Beth Moore

Beth Moore was born on June 16, 1957. She is an American Evangelist, author, and Bible study leader. She is the founder of Living Proof Ministries, a Bible-based organization for women in Huston, Texas. She currently attends the Bayou City Fellowship in Huston, where her son-in-law, Curtis Jones, is lead pastor.

My name is Pride. I am a cheater.

I cheat you of your God-given destine . . . because you demand your own way.

I cheat you of contentment. . . because you "deserve better than this."

I cheat you of knowledge. . . because you already know it all.

I cheat you of healing. . . because you're too full of *you* to forgive.

I cheat you of holiness. . . because you refuse to admit when you are wrong.

I cheat you of vision. . . because you'd rather look in the mirror than out the window.

I cheat you of genuine friendship. . . because nobody's going to know the real you.

I cheat you of love. . . because real romance demands sacrifice.

I cheat you of greatness in Heaven. . . because you refuse to wash another's feet on earth.

I cheat you of God's glory. . . because I convince you to seek your own.

My name is Pride. I am a cheater.

You like me because you think I'm always looking out for you. . . Untrue!

I'm looking to make a fool of you. God has so much for you, I admit, but don't worry if you stick with me, you'll never know.

Moore, Beth, *My Name is Pride*

What are you *Really* Fighting About?

Getting to the Root of your Marriage Conflicts

Michael and Amy Smalley

Michael and Amy Smalley hold master's degrees in clinical psychology from Wheaton College. Michael is the Director of Marriage and Family at the Woodlands United Methodist Church in Texas. They have spoken to audiences around the world. They have authored and co-authored several relationship books including *The DNA of Relationships, Men's Relational Toolbox,* and *Don't Date Naked.*

Most of us have experienced our share of instant arguments. Since you are human, you will say and do things that frustrate, hurt, or damage your spouse. And your spouse will say and do things that hurt you. Certain words, looks, or actions will provoke strong feelings, and its fight time, again!

But many couples do not realize that hurt feelings are really fears that have been awakened. Those fears fuel fights and reactive behavior. Understanding the way relational fear feeds recurring conflict is the key to breaking the cycle of hurtful arguments.

The Fear Lurking Behind Conflict.
Let's try thinking about the relationship between fear and hurt feelings in this way. Normally your fear is taking a nap on the couch. When your spouse pushes your hot button—think of it as pushing a doorbell—the ringing awakens your fear, which jumps up to respond to the threat (the one that pushed your hot button). That is the origin of conflict. Fear is awakened. The kind of fear we are referring to is not associated with being scared because you walk into a dark room or see a spider or because you encounter a creepy clown. We are talking about relational fears, such as the fear of rejection, disconnection, failure, unhappiness, or loss.

If you have a primary relational fear for example of not being good enough, that is the main hot button to awakening fear in you. If your spouse suggests often enough during a disagreement that he or she was disappointed over your answer that awakened your fear of not being good enough, suddenly you are ready for a fight.

Here is a short version of how someone may develop a fear hot button. Even though your parents love you, the feeling of not being good enough was there. If a baseball game went three hits for four times at bat with two doubles, maybe you heard "*great game,*" just think, if you had been a little faster, you could have beat out that ground ball and been four for four. Wouldn't that have been amazing?

Here is the truth; going three for four is amazing, but it was not perfect. Most likely that fear of not being good enough will show up in your marriage, your parenting, your workplace, and your friendships.

Everyone has relational fears to some degree. Once you recognize how they operate, you can begin to avoid frustrating, hurtful arguments.

The Cycle of Negative Responses

Relational fears wake up ready to either fight or flee. One person's fear might explode, screaming and expressing anger. Another person's fear might open the door of conflict, then quickly shut it and stuff the anger internally. Both ways of dealing with fear lead to negative responses. And either way, your spouse feels your negative response.

Here is where awakening fear gets really messy. When your initial negative response pushes your spouse's hot button, his or her fear is awakened. Then once your spouse's fear is awakened, he or she will respond negatively to you. This starts a cycle—you feel hurt and respond negatively again. And round and round it goes.

Most of the time what couples describe as their issues are not actually their real issues. They could argue about sex, money, time, or in-laws. But the real issues are their relational fears.

The Top 20 Relational Fears

Being rejected	Feeling devalued	Feeling judged
Feeling humiliated	Feeling disconnected	Feeling misunderstood
Feeling lonely	Feeling abandoned	Feeling powerless
Feeling unimportant	Feeling invalidated	Feeling ignored
Feeling defective	Feeling unwanted	Feeling inferior
Feeling disliked	Feeling worthless	Feeling distrustful
Feeling like a failure	Feeling unhappy	

Not only does everyone experience relational fears to some degree, but we also share similar fears. The twenty most common relational fears are listed to help you identify what awakens your fear cycle.

Smalley, Michael, and Amy, *Why Good Marriages Go Bad*

Defusing Fear in your Marriage

Ted Lowe

Ted Lowe is a speaker, an author, and the Director of Married People, the marriage division at The Rethink Group also known as Orange, a non-profit organization devoted to influencing those who influence the next generation.

I get fearful during scary movies and in-flight turbulence. Those fears are easily identified, but understanding relational fears is more difficult. How can you identify and defuse the fears that are driving conflicts with your spouse?

One way is to evaluate the elements of a recent conflict or argument you had with your spouse. When you have a conflict in mind, find a piece of paper and write down the details from your perspective (not your spouse's). What was the argument about?

Next, write the answer to these two questions. What bothered you about this conflict? Why did you feel anger, hurt or frustration?

This is the most difficult and important step in stopping arguments that recycle because it requires you to think deeply about why you feel hurt during conflicts with your spouse. It may be emotionally painful. But do not give up or settle for a superficial answer like "it just made me mad" or "I guess I'm easily triggered." What is the real reason that made you mad? What might you have been afraid of? (Refer to "The Top 20 Relational Fears" listed on the previous page by Michael and Amy Smalley.)

Once you have pinpointed your fear, the next step is to identify your typical reaction. Usually a response style can be pinned down specifically. Do you shout? Give the cold shoulder? Pretend you are not upset? Take a look at the choices that best describe your reaction style or fight pattern, then work on breaking the cycle.

Ways People Respond to Fear

Withdraw	Go into fix-it mode
Escalate	Complain/criticize
Blame	Lash out
Manipulate	Exaggerate/catastrophize
Throw tantrums	Become enraged
Go into denial	Shut down emotionally
Invalidate/minimize	Deflect with humor
Become defensive	Display sarcasm
Become clingy	Rationalize
Become passive-aggressive	Become indifferent

Break the Cycle.
When you have the opportunity to talk with your spouse, ask him or her to do the same exercise just described. Then discuss your findings with each other; share the primary fears and the negative responsive behaviors you both uncovered.

This is not the time to rehash past conflicts. All you need to say is, "I think my primary fear is_____, and when my fear is triggered; my negative response is usually_____." It is important to listen carefully and respond to each other in a tender way, communicating love. Be extra sensitive, no one enjoys talking about deep-seated fears.

Once you understand this negative cycle, discuss how you can change it by being more sensitive to each other's primary fears. For example, if your default negative response is to go silent, which you know triggers your spouse's fear of disconnection. So, during an argument, you can choose to stay engaged and respectfully share your hurt feelings with your spouse, which would reassure them that you are not disconnecting.

Choose a More Positive Response.
The next time your fear is awakened, how could you respond in a more positive manner? The Bible requires believers to be humble. We are to care not only about our own interests but also the interest of others, the foremost being your spouse. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others, better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

Take a moment to share with each other your ideal positive responses. As one of you shares, the other should listen and affirm, not make derogatory comments. No fair saying, "Yeah, right. I can't see you ever responding like that!"

It is essential that you realize you are 100 percent responsible for your own hot buttons and responses and zero percent responsible for your spouse's hot buttons and responses. You have the power of choice. You are no longer a victim of your past circumstances. You can choose a new, positive way to resolve conflicts.

Conflicts will always be knocking on the door of your marriage. The good news is that if you deal with your fears, conflicts do not have to move in and make a mess of your marriage.

Lowe, Ted, *Your Best Us: Marriage is Easier than You Think*

Where Did All the Trouble Begin?

D. Eric Schansberg, PhD.

Eric Schansberg is Professor of Economics at Indiana University Southeast. He is a Christian book author and co-authored, *Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum*, a 21-month program designed to "thoroughly equip" lay leaders and Kingdom workers. Eric currently teaches *The Word Diet*, a discipleship study on Pure Radio, 92.3 FM. His passion is teaching others about Christ and his Word. Eric is married to our talented daughter, Tonia. Together they teach a college age Bible study class every week beginning with a delicious dinner beforehand. They celebrated 25 years together July 2020 and are the parents of four sons, working hard to raise a few good men.

Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty (Hebrew: *arum*—negatively wise and understanding; prudent—caring for future) than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"

The woman said to the serpent (Hebrew: *nahas*—creature of chaos opposed to God), "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. Then the eyes of both were opened and they realized they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

The serpent injected doubt about God's Word and God's love (Genesis 3:1).

Eve failed to know and apply God's Word correctly. In Genesis 2:16-17, God said, "you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." But note in Genesis 3:2-3 above, Eve misquotes God; she specifies "fruit" which God does not mention, she refers to the tree in the

middle of the garden instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and she adds, "you must not touch it."

The serpent downplayed the cost, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4).
The serpent twisted the truth and over emphasized the benefits (Genesis 3:4-5).

Adam and Eve both denied God's judgment (Genesis 3:6)
Cost or Consequences of Adam and Eve's Sin (See Genesis 3:8-24).

"So the LORD God said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed (Hebrew: *arar*—to be under a curse—an expression of a wish that misfortune, evil, doom befall someone) are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals" (Genesis 3:14).

To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children" (Genesis 3:16).

To Adam he said, ". . . because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17). "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food" (Genesis 3:19).

The Anatomy of Sin: See, Take, Eat, Give.
"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Genesis 3:6). Notice the progressive downward spiral effect of sin. The enemy was not viewed as a threat!

With respect to marriage, sin represents a displacement of priorities from God and others to self, rather than a slippery slope, there is a subtle shift. The grass looks greener somewhere else, we let our guard down, and fail to understand the consequences of sin.

Recognize and deal with generational sins! Often the trouble starts here before marriage begins. Learn to deal with generational sin in your life passed down from one generation to the next. Take the responsibility to break the chain—you be the one to break down the barrier: abuse, addiction, porn, adultery, immorality, gambling, divorce, anger management, etc.

The Silence of Adam.
"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable (Hebrew: *hamad*—to covet, lust over) for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Genesis 3:6b).

Why does Adam usually get blamed for Original Sin? First of all, he did not do anything to discourage Eve from doing what she did (sin of omission), second of all, he ate it" (sin of commission) and third, God considered him the leader: "But the LORD God called to the man, where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

"for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

"for Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13). Adam failed to lead.

God told Adam what to do from the beginning: his leadership role, and his responsibility.

Adam had greater knowledge, leadership expectations, and more accountability than Eve. (Genesis 2:15-18, 3:7a).

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man. You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

Eve was taught poorly by Adam. (Genesis 3:2-3). Eve misquoted what God said.

Adam's failure to step up: physically present but emotionally absent! He failed to properly lead.

God's Word was turned into created order, but the silence of Adam turned creation into chaos.

"So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

Man is made in God's image and called to turn darkness and chaos into light, order, and beauty vs. stepping in and creating more chaos and darkness. We are called to turn chaos into light, order, and beauty in our homes, our workplace, etc.

The Blame Game.
"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man. Where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid. And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? The man said, the woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it. Then the LORD God said to the woman, what is this you have done? The woman said, the serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Genesis 3:7-13).

Personal character problems and poor choices are our own responsibility. God commands us to be submissive, to love and to respect.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

Wives, submit (Greek: *hypotasso*—be subject to, in submission, obedient) to your husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head (Greek: *kephale*—top stone in a building, capstone, the point of origin) of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

Our Character Matters.
It is important for the husband to be someone to whom submission is easy; for the wife to be someone who makes headship easy—for the husband to be someone who is respectable; for the wife to be someone who is lovable.

The flip side of Genesis 3's sins are for Adam to be actively and appropriately involved as a leader of the household and for Eve to make it easy for Adam to speak and act appropriately by being encouraging and loving.

Schansberg, D. Eric, Professor Indiana University, Christian book author, Marriage Retreat Presentation

Fight to Win by Identifying the Enemy

Know How the Enemy, Satan, Works

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrotts

Les is a professor of psychology at Northwest University. Lee and Leslie are founders of the Center for Healthy Relationships on the campus of Olivet University. Married in 1984, the Parrotts bring real-life examples to their speaking platform. Leslie is a marriage and family therapist, and Les is a clinical psychologist. Together they ensure a presentation that is grounded, insightful, and cutting edge.

Satan is out to destroy, steal away, or kill our love, romance, joy, and excitement. He is like the lion—subtle; we do not see him coming. He preys on the weak, isolated, and the lame. Guard your heart; it is the wellspring of life! Satan is the prince of this world until Christ returns.

> "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

> "if you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us, for we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

> "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Understand Satan's Strategy and Schemes.
In order that Satan might not win, do not be ignorant of his schemes and strategies in the world and of the flesh. Satan is the prince of this world. Do not be ignorant of how he works.

Addictions are a stronghold of the enemy giving easy access to evil.

Anger: Resolve conflicts—do not go to bed angry.

Do not let emotions run your life! ". . . in your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Understand your Authority: Overcome Sin.
We can live a victorious life in Christ! Submit to God's authority: saturate your life with Scripture. Memorize key verses. There is power in God's Word.

> "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
>
> "Some people are like seeds along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them" (Mark 4:15).

Jesus lives in you! We have the power; you do not need to be afraid.

> "Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18).
>
> "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:14-15).
>
> "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2).
>
> "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).
>
> "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).
>
> "Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:3-4).
>
> "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Team Up Against the Enemy.
Break generational sin coming down from one generation to another—break the curse! Learn from these examples in Genesis:

Abraham/Sarah: lied—said she was his half-sister instead of his wife.
Isaac/Rebecca: lied—said she was not his sister.
Jacob/Esau—Jacob stole Esau's birthright and deceived his father.
Jacob's sons—got rid of Joseph, their brother, and lied to their father.

How to live a victorious life in Christ: Submit to God; resist Satan; live a righteous life; anoint your home with the oil of the Holy Spirit; pray together out loud; and finally, worship and sing together!

Parrott, Drs. Les and Leslie, *The Good Fight,* Professors of Psychology, NW University, Marriage Specialists

Good and evil both increase at compound interest.
That is why the little decisions you and I
make every day are of such infinite importance.
The smallest good act today
is the capture of a strategic point from which,
a few months later, you may be able
to go on to victories you never dreamed of.
An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger
today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or
bridgehead from which the enemy
may launch an attack
otherwise impossible.

C. S. Lewis
1898-1963

Confronting in Love

Sandy Baker

Sandy has appeared previously with her husband, Tom. Most importantly she is his helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led "*Thoroughly Equipped*" a 21-month Discipleship Curriculum several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the China orphanage/adoption arena one of her most humbling experiences. Together she and Tom offer marriage counseling to engaged and married couples.

Conflicts are usually the symptoms of a wedge that has already been driven between you and your spouse somehow in the past. Disagreements between spouses appear a number of times in Scripture. Solomon's poetic description of his misunderstanding with his new bride demonstrates a difference of feelings, awkward communication, and poor timing in learning to live together in love. Abraham and Sarah quarreled over her childlessness (Genesis 16:5), as did Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 30:1-2). Job's wife disagreed with his response to his illness (Job 2:9-10). The prophet Malachi denounced the priest who had broken, and not mended, their wedding vows (Malachi 2:14-16).

Disagreements are common, but Scripture also provides guidance. Both Paul and Peter give clues to the prevention and settlement of domestic clashes. To discordant couples in Corinth, Paul wrote "God has called us to live in peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15). That is the ultimate objective. Peter advised wives experiencing strained relations with unbelieving husbands to win them through consistently gentle and quite spirits.

> Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to our own husband so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Human nature has not changed. Competition and contention lead only to harsh consequences. Love, on the other hand, "It always protects, always, trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Jesus taught us to remove the plank in our own eyes before we try to get rid of the specks of dust in the eyes of others (Matthew 7:3-5).

Mercy is a vital part of relaxing tensions. A patient, forgiving, tolerant spirit eases confrontations (Micah 6:8). Sensitivity in timing also recaptures

warm affection. We should not let problems fester into bitterness. The New Testament cautions us to address anger before the sun goes down (Ephesians 4:26). Even if all cannot be resolved, the peace process is begun.

The Voice

Mercy is when we deserve punishment, but punishment is withheld. It is when we do not get what we deserve and are forgiven. EGO, to me, has become to mean: "Edging God Out!" We can get so caught up in being right and wanting to win at all costs, we forget that there is a high price to pay. God does not have a chance to work in you; we lose the respect of our spouse and our character suffers. Realizing that our character is the only thing we take with us when we leave this world, will hopefully, foster an attitude of grace giving. When our new normal becomes grace giving by offering undeserved blessings and unmerited favor to others our own hearts become the ones enriched and renewed.

Finally, we must choose to forgive. Calm settles over us when we allow Christ to control hurts. He modeled forgiveness (1 Peter 2:23), and he alone can give us strength to bury revenge and to restore harmony in relationships. Believers are to be peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9).

> "When they hurled their insults, at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1Peter 2:23).
>
> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

The Women's Study Bible, NIV, Tommy Nelson

God's Opinion of Divorce: Broken Marriage Vows

Dr. Ronald Sauer

Ron and Sue Sauer are best known for their "Sweet and Sour" ministry. They feel that Biblical Marriage Training is truth expressed in love. We depend on God's Word to supply this truth. When we are hurting in our marriages, we can diminish the self-inflicted pain and suffering when we follow his divine plan. We will see Dr. Sauer again within these pages.

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Exodus 20:7). We should not take the name of the Lord in vain. We should take note of the seriousness of vows that we make, in the name of the Lord. We evoke God's presence as a party and witness to the vow.

Any person who enters marriage without a full intent to be faithful to his or her spouse for the rest of his or her life should not marry. Brides and grooms vow to remain married regardless of circumstances—for better or worse, richer, or poorer, in sickness and in health. Marriage is a One-Flesh Covenant! It is a permanent state of being.

> "Another thing you do, you flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, why? It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.
>
> Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit, they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking Godly offspring. So, guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.
>
> I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel, and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment, says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 2:13-16).

Sauer, Ronald, PhD., Bible Professor, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. Retreat Presentation

7

The will to Forgive

The Voice

Some of us have early memories of family and friends who have spent time and energy thinking and plotting of ways to pay back "a wrong for a wrong" rather than seeking positive solutions to problems. As a child, I remember the phrase: don't get mad, get even!

A heartfelt "I am sorry, let's talk about this!" would have taken someone far in communicating personal feelings, opening conversation, and coming to a compromising solution. Although Tom and I still have much to learn, we continue to work at finding positive solutions when problems occur even after 55 years of marriage. And problems will continue to occur until sanctification is completed and Christ takes us home.

True forgiveness is a weight lifted that only God can do. It is a decision of the will long before it reaches the heart. Real forgiveness is not instantaneously obtained, but through time and prayer, forgiveness eventually becomes reality. Humbling yourself first before God will have a positive effect on your marriage when disputes arise.

Peter asked in Matthew 18:21-22, if someone should be forgiven up to seven times. Jesus responded, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times." He meant every time! If we choose forgiveness, eventually our hearts will be free to move on with life. Refusing to forgive keeps us in bondage to the one with whom we are angry. When we allow the hurt to fester and the memories to play over and over again in our minds, bitterness grows and sucks our joy and peace away and leaves us hardened and incapable of loving.

God's grace can turn hurt and anger into heartfelt compassion and empathy. With his help we will be able to say, "Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do."

Many broken marriages today, could have been saved with a willingness to put pride aside, sit across the table from one another, and work toward a compromising solution. We must learn to listen to our spouse and talk through the hurts. This is our prayer for you as you read "Marriage for Life.

Don't Let Satan Live Rent Free
in Your Mind or Heart!

Total Forgiveness

R.T. Kendall

Robert Tillman Kendall is a Christian writer, speaker, and teacher who pastored Westminster Chapel for 25 years. He is author of more than 50 books, including Total Forgiveness.

One of the ways we tear down our home is through unforgiveness, which allows bitterness and resentment to take root. Bitterness is the result of responding improperly to a hurt, and resentment is the bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly.

> "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:15).

The Bible likens bitterness to a root. Roots must be planted. So, what is the seed that sprouts into a root of bitterness when planted? It is a hurt! When someone hurts you, it is as if a seed has been dropped into the soil of your heart. You can choose to respond in two ways: You can either reach down to pull up the seed by forgiving the offender, or you can cultivate the seed by continuing to review the hurt over and over again.

Bitterness is a result of dwelling too long on a hurt. It is the result of not truly forgiving an offender. Instead of explaining the disappointments, fighting back without getting even, forgiving when they repent, or working on a Biblical solution to the problem; we allow the hurt to paralyze us and we replay the offense in our minds and become embittered toward our spouse.

What is the evidence that we have become embittered toward our spouse? Here are some warning signs of embittered-ness:

Frequent arguments	Inability to resolve conflicts
Outbursts of anger	Withdrawal/silent treatment/cold shoulder
Diminished affection	Sarcasm
Hurting back	Condescending remarks/criticism
Suspicion/distrust	Hypersensitivity
Intolerance/impatience	Lack of companionship
Lack of respect	Lack of kindness and sympathy

Angry rebellious children are a consequence of being exposed to their parents' malignant relationship.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is first and fundamentally a promise. Forgiveness is an act of will.

> "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

God does not sit in heaven and emote feelings of forgiveness, but he goes on record stating his forgiveness of our sins. When we forgive, we are promising to our spouse three things:

1. We promise to the forgiven not to bring up the offense again. We will not use it against them in anyway.

2. We promise not to speak to others about the offense. That is, we cover the sin in love, not revealing to others that which has been covered.

3. We promise not to dwell on the offense. This is the most important step in forgiving. We do not play it over and over in our minds. We choose to hold our spouse's face before God and pray for them. We choose to see the words "I have forgiven you" on their foreheads instead of seeing a target for darts!

When God says he forgets our sins he is not saying he has amnesia. He is saying he will not review our sins in his mind and not hold our sins against us. God remembers the righteousness of his Son and imputes that righteousness to our account. "What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3). "As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not" (Romans 4:17). The words, "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death, for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:23-24).

Similarly, we are required to impute our forgiveness to our spouse. Forgiveness is an act of will not an act of the emotion. You may think that you cannot forgive your spouse, but you can, and you must. "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

When God commands us to do something, he has given us the resources to do it. He promises to give us the ability and the desire to obey him. ". . . for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Kendall, R. T., *Total Forgiveness*, Charisma House

The Ability to Forgive

Quotes that Offer Healing

Dr. David Stoop

Dr. David Stoop is the founder and director of the Center for Family Therapy. He is the author of more than 25 books, including *Forgiving the Unforgiveable*. He and his wife have co-authored books and lead worldwide seminars and retreats on topics such as marital relationships parenting, men's issues, fathering, and forgiveness.

- There is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love.
- To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.
- You cannot undo anything you have already done, but you can face up to it. You can tell the truth; you can seek forgiveness. And then let God do the rest.
- The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naïve forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.
- You will know that forgiveness has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.
- When a deep injury is done to us, we never recover until we forgive.
- He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.
- Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.
- God pardons like a mother, who kisses the offense into everlasting forgiveness.
- True forgiveness is not an action after the fact; it is an attitude with which you enter each moment.
- Forgiveness is the economy of the heart. . . forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, and the waste of spirits.
- Forgiveness is the needle that knows how to mend.
- Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting.

Stoop, Dave, Dr., *Forgiving our Parents, Forgiving Ourselves, The Definitive Guide,* Clinical Psychologist, University Southern California

Steps to Reconciliation

D. Eric Schansberg, PhD. and
Tonia Schansberg

Eric Schansberg is Professor of Economics at Indiana University Southeast. He is a Christian book author and co-authored *Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum,* 21-month program designed to prepare lay leaders and Kingdom workers. Eric currently teaches *The Word Diet,* a discipleship study on Pure Radio, 92.3 FM. His passion is teaching others about Christ and his Word. Eric is married to our talented daughter Tonia, who has a master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling. Together they teach a college age Bible study every week beginning with a delicious dinner beforehand. They are the parents of four sons and are working hard to raise a few good men.

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship—especially one that will last a lifetime. In fact, if there is never conflict in your marriage, I challenge you to consider that if you bury the hurts, you will later find yourself harboring resentment. A marriage is made up of two people whose sin nature gets the better of them sometimes. A healthy marriage experiences conflict, but quickly seeks reconciliation. How do we navigate a discussion when tensions are high and communicating with your spouse is the last thing you want to do at the moment? How do we reconcile? Where do we begin?

When there is tension or a blow up with your spouse, it may be that you have no fault in creating or perpetuating the conflict, but this is usually rare. It is important that you step back and consider if and how you played a part in creating the conflict. This requires prayer, humility, and a good honest look at yourself.

> "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment . . ." (Romans 12:3).

We are often temped, especially when angry, to point the finger and blame others. But Matthew 7:3 asks, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" And Romans 3:23 states that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." If you are struggling to find any fault in yourself, I suggest that you ask God to reveal your part in this—ask him to help you understand your spouse's view of the situation.

So, the first step is to acknowledge your sin. The second step is confession. We must confess to God and to one another because when we sin against another

person, we sin against God, as well. Confession prompts forgiveness which is necessary for reconciliation to take place.

> "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. . ." (James 5:16).

Confession should be done quickly to prevent the hurt from festering and growing. Confession should be stated specifically to show true remorse and to make clear that you are aware of what you did wrong. Confessing specifically brings out into the open and allows healing to take place. Once confessed, the wedge between us and God and our spouse is removed and there is nothing hidden; therefore, Satan cannot hold shame over us.

The third step is repentance. God promises to forgive our sin when we confess. But confession, which is merely words, can become sincere when it is followed by repentance. Repentance requires action—positive behavioral change and progress: "turning from wicked ways" and "turning back to God." Our sin should grieve us and cause us sorrow that leads to a deep desire for change.

> "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. . ." (Acts 3:19).

This is not saying that we will never fail again, but that we are aware of our weakness and that we are being purposeful to grow in that area. We know from 2 Corinthians 7:10, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. . ." What a beautiful thing to have no regret.

The next step towards reconciliation is to forgive. If you are the one who offended your spouse, pray for the words to speak, and pray for your spouse to be willing to forgive. Be prepared to demonstrate love, grace, and patience. Depending on the offense, it may take your spouse some time to forgive completely.

We need to remember who we are—God's chosen people, dearly loved, forgiven in Christ, and clothed in Christ. With this in mind, we are called to forgive as Christ forgave us—with no concessions, no if's, and's, or but's.

> "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Our sin nature may scream that we have the right to be angry. But if we are Christians, we are followers of Christ, seeking to live as he did; we are Christ's ambassadors—his representatives. This is a high calling which requires great

humility and a willingness to love others more than ourselves. This is what Christ lived out for us—the example he left for us.

> "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling, and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).

We must learn to forgive—even if the person does not acknowledge they have hurt us, even if they do not ask for our forgiveness. If you do not forgive, you will find a bitter root growing up and a wall growing between you and your spouse.

If you are struggling to forgive, pray for your spouse and ask God for perspective. Consider the alternative; will you stay angry forever? Will you keep tension between you and your spouse another day? Let God soften you with his overwhelming love and grace—consider how much he has forgiven you.

> "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:14-15).

And when you choose to forgive, it is important that you act on it. In other words, demonstrate your forgiveness. Show love to your spouse again. Be affectionate again. Use words of affirmation and encouragement. Forgiveness is vital to reconciliation and vital to any relationship that will last a lifetime.

Schansberg, D. Eric, PhD., and Tonia Schansberg, Masters Marriage and Family Counseling, Retreat Presentation

To love at all is to be vulnerable.
Love anything and your heart will certainly
be wrung and possibly broken.
If you want to make sure of keeping it intact,
you must give your heart to no one,
not even to an animal.
Wrap it carefully round with hobbies
and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements.
Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin
of your selfishness.
But in that casket—safe, dark,
motionless, airless—it will change.
It will not be broken,
it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

C. S. Lewis
1898-1963

Love Like You've Never Been Hurt

Hope, Healing, and the Power of an Open Heart

Jentezen Franklin

Jentezen Franklin is an author and pastor. In his NYT bestseller, *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt.* He shares his own story of personal pain and shows us how to find the strength, courage, and motivation to overcome betrayal, heartache, and relational disappointment.

Many of us fail to realize that what matters most in life are relationships. An abundant life does not consist of the abundance of stuff. Regrettably, the world does not place much value on relationships. But Jesus emphasized in a big way the importance of relationships. This is what life is about—loving God, loving others, and loving ourselves.

Love Never Fails.
Love is a weapon that can shatter division and rebuild what has been broken. When you love like you've never been hurt, God will use even the worst that has been done to you for his glory. Scars are a testimony of God's ability to heal deadly wounds. Loving like you've never been hurt is not something we can do on our own strength. We need the grace of God to help us make it.

Choose to Love Others—Always
Choose to Press Forward
Choose to Heal your Wounds—God wants to. Let him!
Choose to Keep Driving

If you choose to forgive, forgiveness can rewrite your future! God never commanded us to reject people because they are not living up to a certain spiritual standard. Love does not demand its own way. It never loses faith. It is always hopeful. It endures through every circumstance. Billy Graham is often quoted to have said, "It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge, and my job to love." Love people who have messed up.

It Is Never Wrong to Love.
Loving does not mean lowering your standards. Three values that can help govern not only your life but the lives of your children: personal values, traditional values, and core values.

Personal values revolve around our personal relationship with God. Being a follower of Christ means being a disciplined follower.

Traditional values are personal values that have been passed down from one generation to the next. Traditional values provide a framework for your family in doing the right thing. Both personal and traditional values are safeguards that protect your core values.

Core values are uncompromising Biblical standards. Core values never change, not even if society or culture changes. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). You must have barriers set up to keep the core of your family intact.

Stop Keeping Score and Start Losing Count.
One of the most powerful lessons Jesus ever taught was on forgiveness. He gave it because Peter approached Jesus and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" Jesus replied, "No, not seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mathew 18:21-22). No matter how bad we are at math, most of us are good at keeping score when it comes to people who have caused us harm. The Bible is clear on one thing. We must forgive. Want to learn to love like you've never been hurt? Start forgiving!

The Voice

Now this is a tall order if I ever heard of one, when you are the one who needs to forgive. In my own personal life, there have been many needs to forgive. A few are exceptional and have taken its toll as well as consuming my life with past bitterness and pain. I can tell you that after years and years and years of keeping track, I was finally able to let go and forgive the offender. God eventually gave me full insight into their pitiful state of mind. I was miraculously able to say: "Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do." A burden was lifted I did not even realize I was carrying. I was the one set free. I pray that you do not let yesterday, take up too much time and energy today. Life is precious. Live free of bitterness.

Forgiveness is not about keeping score. It is about losing count. While getting hurt is a reality, getting and staying bitter is a reaction. To not forgive is unforgivable. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Every- one says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." Jesus forgives us. Period! Little by little, tap by tap, God will help you release forgiveness. It may take time. But do not stop working at it.

Love Starts Here.
Love yourself first. Shame does not have to lead you. Love can. Self-esteem is not the goal. God-esteem is. You may not be where God wants you to be. But you are destined for the winner's circle. Get ready for a new you. Renew your mind. God wants to restore you. Once we get hold of the truth of grace, not only does it empower us to forgive and love ourselves, but it should also prompt us to forgive and love others.

Loving-Kindness.
Kindness takes work! It is better to be reconciled than to be right. It is not easy to be kind when the pressure is on. It is not easy to be kind when you and your spouse have conflicting ideas, when finances are tight, when your mother-in-law moves in, or when you are the only Christian in the house. But even through these things, we are called to be kind even when we do not feel like it.

Drain the swamp. Get that mean and evil behavior out. Let it go. Put it away. If you cannot be kind or tenderhearted, you need to keep tapping at your forgiveness issue.

Fighters, Fire Starters, and Peacemakers.
Love is not easily angered. It is normal to get angry and to want to do something about it. But we cannot position ourselves to love like we have never been hurt

if we are ruled by our tempers. Anger is not a sin. Mismanaging it is. The best cure to manage your anger is delay. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (Proverbs 16:32, CEV). Unruly emotion will never produce right behavior. Love is not easily angered.

Sometimes you must zip it! I like what Benjamin Franklin said: "Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." A person who manufacturers peace will defuse difficult situations. Seek after peace; pursue it. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). Do not jump into the struggle. Allow the Holy Spirit to guard your unguarded moments.

And We Were One.
Marriage was God's idea. But on the other side is an attack on family and marriage that cannot be denied. Our enemy has an incredibly determined agenda, and destroying your marriage is high on his list. Too many believers are losing this battle, not because it cannot be won, but because they cannot see the path to victory. The greater the battle: the greater the victory.

Divorce is not an option. Marriage is not a test run. Man's number one need is divine help. If he is going to fulfill the call, purpose, and plan of God for his life, he is going to need divine help. There is a door of hope in every valley of martial trouble. God honors commitment.

A Foundation That Lasts.
Long standing hostilities remind me of what the Bible calls in Ezekiel 25:15 (NKV) "old hatred." This Scripture refers to the conflict between the people of Israel and the Philistines, which had endured for generations. Sometimes families will hold on to offenses that happened so long

Ago they forget why they are still mad. Old hatred is definitely not how we learn to love like we've never been hurt.

The Voice

The thought of "Old Hatred" reminded me of the feud between the Kentucky Confederates, the Hatfield family, and the West Virginian Union, the McCoy family, starting back in the 1890's. Tom and I were both raised in Kentucky and we were transferred to West Virginia on two separate occasions. All three of our children were born there, so the history became interesting.

Apparently, the feud started as a payback for a killing which happened during the Civil War but continued for decades. Murders, burning one another's homes, and the stealing of a hog resulted in more hatred and the deaths of several children. One must wonder if anyone remembered why their families hated one another so much. It is so easy to hold on to grudges, but, in the end; we become the ones eaten up with pain and misery.

God is in the business of blessing families. Family brings trouble. It brings challenge. It brings crisis. It brings hurt. Yet, the family is still God's plan and his idea. Let us pass on the garment of faith instead of hostility to the next generation. There is a balance for building successful families with strong foundations. You cannot be so spiritual that you neglect natural things. And you cannot be so natural that you neglect the spiritual things.

Create a legacy. Build up the spiritual home of your family. Each family, including yours, has a history rich in achievement. Within your genes lies strengths that are unique and distinctive. The greatest tribute you can pay to remember lovingly the contributions and standards of the ones who have gone to be with the Lord is to continue in their ways. It is time we started passing on generational blessings to our children. They are our core values.

Fight for Your Family.
If we want to win our families to God, we must do just one thing: fight for them! The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. Your first assignment in your battle plan is to take time to assess the condition of your home—your spiritual condition. Start by anointing your home and family, welcoming in the Holy Spirit. Speak a blessing over your home. Serve communion in your home. *Commit* to your commitments. Do not waver in your faith. Do not let culture define or influence your identity, your values, or your family.

Love God Like You've Never Been Hurt.
The enemy's number one goal is to get you mad at God. Do not stop trusting God. Love like you've never been hurt. When you are in crisis, God is not. Teach the angels a thing or two. It is one thing to worship out of duty. It is another thing to choose to worship from a deep desire. Lord, prop us up on our leaning side, so we will stand straight and tall again to glorify you.

Keep Climbing.
You cannot love in the past. The call is upward. Where you are is not your final destination. God is calling you to a place greater than you are. The enemy is great at flaunting our weaknesses right in our faces. The pieces of armor God has given us are defensive. These include the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith. The only offensive weapon in our

spiritual arsenal is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. When you are battling for your future or the future of your family, the only offensive tactic you need is the Word. The Word of God is always enough.

The dirtiest battle is your greatest victory.

God's covenant from heaven to you is that love will never fail. It may take a month, or a year, or a lifetime, but do not give up. Do not stop loving. It is never out of order to love. It is never compromising to love. It is never wrong to love. Love will not fail; love will triumph.

Franklin, Jentezen, *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt: Hope, Healing and the Power of an Open Heart*

If today were your last, would you do what you're
Doing? Or world you love more, give more,
Forgive more: Then do so! Forgive and give
As if it were your last opportunity.
Love like there's no tomorrow,
And if tomorrow comes,
Love again.

Max Lucado
1955

A Prayer of Forgiveness

Rick Warren

Rick Warren is an American Baptist Evangelical pastor and author. He is the founder and Senior Pastor of Saddleback Church, the sixth largest megachurch in the US. He is also the bestselling author of many Christian books including *The Purpose Driven Life,* which has sold more than 30 million copies. He wrote: "Right now in the world, the minority view is getting the majority of press, and you just don't hear the fact that the vast majority of people believe that marriage is what it's always been since the Creation: "one man and one woman for life."

Dear Lord, I may not be able to forget, but I am choosing to forgive

_____ (person's name).

I realize trust may take time to rebuild,

But I choose to hold no grudges.

Help me to let go of bitterness or anger in my heart,

So that I may live in freedom.

Give me your grace so that I may relinquish

my "right" to get even.

Help me understand that you have forgiven me

And that I can forgive_____ (person's name) through you.

I trust in your power to do that.

The Voice

My prayer is that you use this prayer every time you find yourself needing to forgive. And sometimes you may need to pray it over and over again. Pray until you begin to feel a lifting of your heart toward the other person. Consider how much God has forgiven you and give all your anger and frustration to God; let him help you forgive as God forgave you. Forgiveness is an act of the will long before it reaches the heart. Ask God to help you even when you do not feel you can. God can do amazing things. Then over time, continue this prayer of blessing.

Now, Lord, I ask you to bless_____ (person's name).
In particular, I ask you to bless them with these things:

_____.

God, please replace my hurt with your healing.
Replace my pain with your peace.
Replace my loss with your love.
May the past truly be the past.
In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Warren, Rick, *40 Days of Prayer,* Zondervan Press

Forgiven by the Savior

The Ultimate Unmerited Favor

Sandy Baker

Sandy has appeared previously with her husband, Tom. Most importantly she is his helpmate in the many Christian endeavors they pursue. She has led "*Thoroughly Equipped*" a 21-month Discipleship Curriculum several times and mentors others in her desire to strengthen Christ's awareness, especially to those who do not know him as Lord. She considers her work in the China orphanage/adoption arena one of her most humbling experiences. Together she and Tom offer marriage counseling to engaged and married couples.

There are many married couples who are not aware of the great love God has for them. How could you, if you have never been exposed to the Bible or had anyone tell you about it. The Bible explains that every last one of us has sinned—we miss the mark. On our own we are unable to meet God's standard because God is perfect. It also explains that our sin separates us from God. This is a problem because God loves us and wants relationship with us. He wants to be our Father and our friend. So, he sent his son Jesus who willingly paid our penalty. When Jesus died on the cross, he made the ultimate sacrifice—his life for ours. But Hebrews 12:2 tells us that it was "for the joy set before him that he endured the cross." This is because he knew that his death would allow us to be reconciled to God.

The ultimate unmerited favor is what God has done for us. Through the death of his son Jesus all our sins—past, present, and future, are forgiven and we are granted eternal life with God. All we need to do to receive his gift of life is to place our faith in Jesus Christ—to admit that we are sinners, to ask him to forgive us, and to let him know that we want him to take over our lives. Prayerfully consider the following verses:

> ". . . for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23).
>
> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
>
> "Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
>
> ". . . if you confess with your mouth. Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Romans 10:9-10).
>
> "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me"(Revelation 3:20).
>
> "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, he changes your heart, reshapes your life, and transforms the way you think and live. As you submit to the reshaping influences of God, he becomes the object of your worship. As you yield your will to his, your desires begin to align with his. Instead of asking, "What do I want?" you begin asking yourself: "What would please God?" His rules begin to define the moral boundaries of your life, and his Kingdom work becomes the joyful calling of your heart. It is radical to believe that God really does exist and regards those who seek him. And that radical belief does radical things to your life.

Some people feel they need to clean up their act first, but God accepts us just as we are—right where we are. Romans 5:8 tells us that ". . . God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." There is nothing we can do to be good enough to earn God's grace. Isaiah

64:6 tells us that ". . . all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Only the grace of Jesus can forgive and make us clean—worthy to be in God's presence. And while some change is immediate, growth and maturity continue over time.

In fact, God often uses life's hardships and struggles to grow us and teach us to rely on him. Sadly, we are prone to try and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, but God never wants us to feel alone. He longs for us to come to him in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16: says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." In times of need, our immediate response should be to turn to God in prayer. God does not promise us a trouble-free life. In fact, in John 16:33, Jesus says, "I have told you these things so that in me, you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." These hardships will not end until we are home with Jesus. In the meantime, we pray and rely on Christ. We find our hope in him. So, be encouraged today.

> "Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

I can testify that the above statement is true in my life. While I was not raised in a Christian home, it became obvious over time that God had his hand on me. Tom was raised in a wonderful home with a strong Catholic background. His faith in God was obvious, so the decision to marry in a Catholic church was not an issue for me. Meeting with a priest taught me the basics of the Catholic faith so we could have a wedding ceremony. Our wedding was beautiful, but at that time I had no heartfelt feelings toward God, just curiosities. But every time we moved a neighbor would knock on the door and invite me to a Bible study—God at work! In the beginning I had zero Biblical knowledge so one can only imagine how I managed. I learned the hard way that there was more than one Book of John in the Bible!

But before long, the more I read and learned, the more interested I became. Several years down the road, God made himself undeniably real to me and I surrendered my life to him while reading my Bible sitting under a hair dryer with my hands held high in an upstairs bedroom. It was as simple as that. As I continued to read and study, I grew in the faith and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. He is still growing me today in maturity and wisdom.

As I think back on my life and the experiences God has given Tom and me, our journey would have been so different if it were not for Christ. He never gave up on us and he has grown our faith into a radical faith that fully trusts and relies on him. This faith allowed us to do things we would have never

dreamed of doing otherwise. God can do anything if you are open to receive him into your life. He is waiting for you. Knock and he will answer.

My prayer for you right now, this minute, is that you open your heart, let Jesus Christ into your life, and that you be transformed by his love: his sacrificial love for you. God's forgiveness is the ultimate unmerited favor, and it is free just for the asking. If you desire to trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, just turn your heart toward him and pray this simple prayer.

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner in need of your forgiveness. I am sorry for the wrong things I have done. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and were raised again to life through your resurrection. I ask you to forgive me. Come into my heart. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving me. Amen

After you have prayed this prayer and received Jesus Christ into your life, call and tell a Christian friend or someone from a local church about your decision. Follow Christ and make plans to be baptized as a believer in Christ. Continue to grow in your faith through Bible reading and group study, enjoying like-minded friends. You will find many others who love and support you. May God richly bless you. Regular fellowship with other believers will help you stand strong and grow in your faith.

Afterward

As stated in the Note to the Reader, you will notice many Scriptures about marriage are repeated. Pay attention to them. These offer important Biblical guidance for your marriage.

Also, there are key themes that stand out to me from the articles in *Marriage for Life*. The most important one is love. Do we understand what true love is? Love is wanting what is best for the other person. Love is not just a feeling; Biblical love is a verb and is always followed up with action. Jesus calls us to actively love our spouse even when they are not acting lovingly towards us. Generally, love is reciprocal. As we encourage and love our spouse through the difficult times, love will be returned to us. This requires personal sacrifice and self-discipline.

"Are we equipped to communicate in a way that fosters better understanding of the person we see face to face every day?" Are we humble enough to listen and truly understand the other person's perspective or does our pride dismiss it—dismiss them?

"Do you know your spouse's love language? Do you understand that men and women have different needs?" We cannot satisfy our spouse's needs by giving them what would please us. We must learn what their needs are and do our best to meet them.

Other important themes are fidelity and commitment. When we marry, we make a vow to be faithful for life. We become one with our spouse.

As important as these themes are, we live in the twenty-first century and there are many ideas that come against Biblical marriage. Our philosophies of life are developed within the culture in which we live. We develop worldviews that shape the way we think, the things we desire, the choices we make, the words we say, and the actions we take.

But God is cross cultural. His words hold true across time. God has given us his Word because he knows who we are and knows we are hardwired to make sense of our lives. In his Word, he not only reveals who he is, our loving Father and creator, but also, he defines who we are, his beloved children. His Word reveals that our greatest problem is sin, but he offers us the hope of his amazing grace. And within that grace, he gives our lives meaning and purpose.

It does not matter if we are teenagers just starting to date or if we have been married for years, we are tempted to take the easy path, to follow the wrong role models, and to betray our consciences. It is extremely important to guard

our integrity during these times. God's boundaries are for our good; they provide the best way for us to live our lives.

Frankly, there are strong standards presented within *Marriage for Life.* You can learn from what is said here and seek the discipline it takes to love for a lifetime. Take the time to focus on your particular needs. Ask God to help you discern how to proceed moving forward as you continue to grow in the faith and knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God is faithful and if you are willing to turn to him for help, he will guide you with his wisdom and love.

God wants us to become his ambassadors—to be his representatives here on earth. We are his disciples sent to proclaim him as Lord and to speak on his behalf—to point others to him and to proclaim Christ as Lord to the next generation.

But no matter where we are in terms of dating or years of marriage, Satan roams around like a roaring lion looking for his next victim. The better equipped we can become to help us fight against Satan's attacks, the better prepared we will be to stand firm. During one of the marriage seminars Tom and I attended in our early years, I remember the speaker saying: "Those of you who are here are not the ones who need this seminar the most, but you will yield the greatest benefit." I pray that this book will yield the greatest benefit to you no matter where you are in life's journey.

Appendix A

The Jewish Ketubah Marriage Contract

The Ketubah (Hebrew, "her writing") is the Jewish marriage contract from the groom and read aloud during the marriage ceremony. This one-sided contract was not an illusory obligation, but a document prepared, according to the legal enactments of the Jewish sages (an experienced person respected for sound judgment), by the husband, detailing the responsibilities that he would have to his wife during their wedded life together (Leviticus 18-21).

> "If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married" (Deuteronomy 24:5)."If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights" (Exodus 21:10).

The rabbis extended the explicit Old Testament requirements of food, clothing, and conjugal rights to include the demand that a husband respect his wife and not make her cry. He must deny himself to provide for her needs. One groom wrote, "Be to me a wife according to the Law of Moses and Israel, and I will serve, honor, support, sustain, and clothe thee according to the customs of the Jewish husbands." The traditional order to these verbs expressing responsibility, beginning with "serve," indicates the spirit of the document. The wife has always had the happy responsibility of preserving this document!

Examples of the Ketubah have been found dating to the third century B.C. The use of the Ketubah began in an historical setting in which women were considered mere chattel (slaves) in many societies, making the protection of the rights of a wife even more significant. For the Jewish community and for all the world, the Ketubah stands as a monumental example of the protection of the rights of women. God's plan for the woman in marriage is manifested beautifully in this one-sided document in which the groom makes his commitments to his bride. His signature, together with those who witness the document, is required. The bride is not required to sign because she receives his commitment.

Marriage (Hebrew, *kiddushin*, "sanctification") has always been greatly honored in the Jewish community. This holy ceremony sets apart one man and one

woman from all others to accomplish the purposes for which they were created. In general terms, this could be understood as including companionship with one another, fellowship with the Creator, and continuation of generation. See in Chapter 3: The Specific to Formation of Eve: Genesis 2 by Matthew Henry.

The Ketubah was designed primarily for women and often decorated in an aesthetically beautiful way. Jewish artists and scribes or calligraphers used their creativity and skill to create artistic masterpieces on highly quality paper or parchment. The contract is still written in Aramaic, and popular artistic techniques include micrography, the miniscule Hebrew writing painstakingly executed to shape interesting ornamental designs ((usually with floral or geometric motif); paper cutting figurative art depicting the bride and groom or Biblical couples; and even signs of the zodiac conveying wishes for good luck. A suitable Biblical quotation is often included. The documents are carefully preserved for their historical as well as artistic worth. Though required in the marriage ceremony, a commemorative Ketubah is also a favorite anniversary gift.

A Ketubah to commemorate your marriage may be prepared on the opposite page. It should contain the names of the bride and groom with the names of their fathers. For Jewish families, if either father is a Chen or Levi, this should be indicated. The location of the wedding ceremony, including the city, state, and country and sometimes even the closest waterway (river, sea, lake) for a more exact location, is necessary. The date of the wedding ceremony is also important. In the Jewish tradition, the new day begins at sunset. If the wedding is on Friday night, Saturday's date would be used. The month and year are according to the Jewish sacred calendar.

The responsibilities of the bridegroom are carefully listed. The bride-price (Hebrew, *mohar*) and the dowry, which is brought to the marriage and received by the bridegroom as a loan—to be repaid to the bride if the marriage is dissolved—are included.

> "Pharaoh King of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire. He killed its Canaanite inhabitants and then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife. And Solomon rebuilt Gezer" (I Kings 9:16-17).

A customized Ketubah would include hobbies, professional occupations, family background, and personal interests. The document is then signed by the groom and witnesses who observed the solemn commitment ceremony.

The Dowry: Sealing the Betrothal

The dowry was an essential ingredient in Hebrew marriages except in extremely poor families. It sealed the betrothal, making the marriage legal even before the official ceremony or physical consummation of the marriage.

The dowry could assume several different forms: the bride-price paid to the father or brothers of the bride to compensate for the economic loss to the bride's family by the departure, (Genesis 34:12) gifts from the bridegroom to the bride, gifts to members of the bride's family (Hebrew, *mattan*), (Genesis 24:53) or gifts from the bride's father to the bride (1 Kings 9:16).

> Caleb gave his younger daughter, Acsah, to Othniel. . . Caleb asked her. "What can I do for you? She replied, 'Do me a special favor. Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me also springs of water.' So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs" (Judges 1:14-15).

All gifts to the bride herself helped to ensure her financial security in case of the untimely death of her husband or his departure, since theoretically she remained the owner of her dowry.

In most cases, the dowry was fashioned according to the wealth and position of the bride and her family, even though it was a voluntary gift.

> David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? 'I'm only a poor man and little known." When Saul's servants told him what David had said, Saul replied. 'Say to David, 'the king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies'" (I Samuel 18:23-25).

This property was assigned to the bride and brought into her husband's house upon marriage to help the young couple establish their household. Some have suggested that the dowry was an advance inheritance, meaning that the daughter received her share of the father's estate upon marriage while her brothers had to wait until their father's death to receive their share.

The contents of the dowry were usually portables such as money, jewelry, or other valuables (Genesis 24:22). The lost silver coin in Jesus' parable (Luke 15:8) likely referred to a dowry headpiece of silver coins, popular in Jesus' day.

> "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?" (Luke 15:8).

A dowry could also include work rendered (Genesis 29:18), workers to help in her work (Genesis 29:24,29), or even deeds of bravery (Joshua 15:16) and in very rare cases land (Judges 1:13-15).

This beautiful Old Testament tradition has continued over the centuries as family and friends join together to give brides both useful and aesthetically beautiful gifts and to provide loving service in helping a newly married couple to establish their household.

The Women's Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publisher

Appendix B

101 Conversation Starters for Couples

Gary Chapman and Ramon Presson

Gary Chapman was born on January 10, 1938. He is the Senior Associate Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC., and the Director of Marriage Family Life Consultants, Inc. He is an author, speaker, and counselor, passionate for helping people form lasting relationships. He travels the world presenting seminars on marriage. Ramon Presson is a private counselor.

1. What is something that occurred this past year that you are especially thankful for?

2. In the movie The Karate Kid, young Daniel is befriended by an old Japanese man who teaches him karate, but more importantly offers him kindness and encouragement. Name an older person who blessed you with kindness and encouragement.

3. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. If you have siblings, what was one of the meanest things done to you by a brother or sister? If you are an only child, what was one of the meanest things done to you by a friend?

4. I thought it was one of the coolest items in my wardrobe at the time, but today I am not sure I'd even wear it to a costume party. What is it?

5. Recall something special about your high school or college graduation.

6. Describe your parents' reaction on the day you moved out or left for college.

7. Can you remember a time when you got lost or separated from your family or companions? Describe what happened and how you felt?

8. What high school or college course would you rather flee the country than be forced to take again?

9. When you were growing up, where did your family go on vacations? Describe one of those vacations.

10. What are two things that happened today, and how did you feel about them?
11. What is your most/least favorite trait in others?
12. What is the worst or most unusual job interview you ever had?
13. I wish I could hire _____ to write and record a song from me to you.
14. Recall a time when you were disappointed in not being chosen.
15. In what event would you most like to win an Olympic gold medal?
16. Complete this sentence: "A time that I felt I might be in physical danger was when. . ."
17. Richard Foster says that our lives are bombarded by hurry, crowds, and noise. Which of those three has been most bothersome for you lately?
18. What is something you thoroughly enjoyed doing as a child and have not done in years?
19. What nonbiblical historical event would you like to have witnessed?
20. If you could win any competition in the world, what would it be?
21. What quality or skill that you possess would you find most gratifying to have your child imitate as an adult?
22. What item of clothing in my wardrobe do you really like to see me wear?
23. If you inherited $200,000 (after taxes), what would you do with the money?
24. In retrospect, what is something that your parents were wise in doing in raising you?
25. Complete this sentence: "It would make me a better person if I were more like you in the way you. . ."

Chapman, Gary, and Presson, Ramon, 101 Conversation Starters for Couples

Appendix C

Chesterton on Marriage

G. K. (Gilbert Keith) Chesterton, May 29, 1874—June 14, 1936, was born on Campton Hill in Kensington, London. He was educated at St. Paul's School. Chesterton was a Christian apologists and fiction writer including Fantasy and Detective fiction. His prolific and diverse output included philosophy, ontology, poetry, playwriting, journalism, public lecturing and debating, art and literary criticism. He has been called the "prince of paradox".

The differences between a man and a woman are at the best so obstinate and exasperating that they practically cannot be gotten over unless there is an atmosphere of exaggerated tenderness and mutual interest. To put the matter in one metaphor, the sexes are two stubborn pieces of iron; if they are to be welded together, it must be while they are red-hot.

Every woman has to find out that her husband is a selfish beast, because every day is a selfish beast by the standard of a woman. But let her find out the beast while they are both still in the story of "Beauty and the Beast."

Every man has to find out that his wife is cross—that is to say, sensitive to the point of madness: for every woman is mad by the masculine standard. But let him find out that she is mad while her madness is more worth considering than anyone else's sanity.

This is not a digression. The whole value of the normal relations of man and woman lies in the fact that they first begin really to criticize each other when they first begin really to admire each other.

My Ordinary Days

On the "notion that the unity of marriage, the being one flesh, has something to do with being perfectly happy, or being perfectly good, or even with being perfectly and continuously affectionate."

I tell you; an ordinary and honest man is part of his wife even when he wishes he wasn't. I tell you; an ordinary good woman is part of her husband even when she wishes him at the bottom of the sea. I tell you; that whether the two

people are for the moment friendly or angry, happy or unhappy, the *Thing* marches on, the great four-footed *Thing*, the quadruped of the home. They are a nation, a society, a machine. I tell you; they are one flesh even when they are not one spirit.

Adventures in Mercy

On what the Bible means by calling her husband the "head" of the house . . .

The family is primarily supposed to rest upon consent, that is, on certain spontaneous attachments. . . It is for this reason that the father of a family has never been called "the king of the house" or "the priest of the house" or, again, "the pope of the house." His power was not dogmatic or definite enough for that. He was called "the head of the house." The man is the head of the house, while the woman is the heart of the house. The definition of the head is that it is the thing that talks.

The head of an arrow is not more necessary than the shaft of it; perhaps not so much. The head of an axe is not more necessary than the handle; for mere fighting I would sooner have the handle alone than the blade alone. But the head of axe and arrow is the thing that enters first; the thing that speaks. If I kill a man with an arrow, I send the arrowhead as an ambassador to open the question. If I split a man's skull with an axe, it is the blade of the axe that opens the question as well as the head.

Not the old human family, on which all civilization is built, meant this when it talked about its "head." It has nothing to do with detailed despotism or the control of other people's daily lives. That is quite another and later idea, arising out of the crazy complexity of all high civilizations. If authority means power (which it does not), I think the wife has more of it than the husband. If I look around any ordinary room at all the objects, at their color, choice, and place; I feel as if I were a lonely and stranded male in a world wholly made by women. All the same, if a canvasser comes to urge the cause of the Conservative Radicals or of the Radical Conservatives, it is I who ought to see him. If a drunkard has wandered into my front garden and lain down on the principal flowerbed, it is I who ought to inspect him. If a burglar wanders about the house at night, it is I who ought to parley with him. Because I am the head; I am the tiresome excrescence that can talk to the world.

Chesterton, G. K., *Chesterton on Marriage from de Silva's compilation,* Eric Schansberg Blog

Appendix D

People are asking . . . is This The End?

Signs of God's Providence in a Disturbing New World

Depravity in our Marriages

Dr. David Jeremiah

Dr. Jeremiah, born on February 13, 1941, followed in his father's footsteps to become a minister of the gospel and a conservative evangelical Christian author and minister. He married his college sweetheart, Donna, and founded Turning Point Radio and Television Ministries. Dr. Jeremiah pastors Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, California.

The Voice

While excerpts from Dr. Jeremiah's book may be disturbing to some, Tom and I have found that in these current times of turbulence; full of violence, unrest, and Covid-19, people have been wondering among themselves if we could actually be coming into the last days. While Scripture tells us that no one knows the exact time, ministers and authors are beginning to discuss this issue.

We pray today that we each ask ourselves where we stand in the face of God and his beloved Son. We pray every day for our grandchildren that they would not be exploited by the overabundance of questionable pleasures of the day that will never fully satisfy; but choose to cling to the truth found in God's Word.

Dr. David Jeremiah in his book "*Is This The End?*", *Signs of God's Providence in a Disturbing New World,* talks about how today we live in an age of decadence, where the shameful acts of yesterday are the celebrated triumphs of today. Where perversions are seen as normal, purity is labeled as professing puritan beliefs, and the pursuit of personal pleasure is king. Scripture clearly speaks

of man's propensity to sin and God's holy intolerance of it, so as Christians we should not be surprised at the depts to which humanity has morally fallen. We find ourselves in a place where "anything goes."

"Anything goes" represents the moral relativism that has infected our culture, leaving the West on the brink of spiritual collapse. We are living in a world where anything goes, but nothing satisfies. That is why it is vital for Christ followers to resist the siren calls of our decadent age.

The Bible anticipated these times. In speaking about his Second Coming, the Lord Jesus said, But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah are, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:36-37).

Those words take us back to describe a society swept away by the flood: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6-5 NKJV).

We are also reminded in 2 Timothy "that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves . . . without self-control, brutal, despisers of good . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV).

This rejection of God and his standards is a symptom of our isolation from God. It began at the Fall of Man and continues to this day. Depravity is the root cause of America's moral decline.

Dr. Jeremiah discusses several ways America is living in moral decline and depravity. The depravity of our minds through the Internet, even with its many benefits, bring destructive traps like pornography. The depravity of our military where the Armed Forces have placed restrictions on our chaplains, banning prayer and religious services. And the depravity in medicine where doctors are expelled for posting concerns in health decline from same-sex activity. But below, the focus is on the depravity of our marriages.

Depravity in Our Marriages

Another aspect of our sexually demanding society is vehemence of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning), which has won a great legal victory in 2015. In the case of Obergefell vs. Hodges, the Supreme Court of the United States, in a five to four vote, took it upon itself to "redefine" marriage.

But God himself defined the marriage covenant in Genesis 2, in the Garden of Eden, before human governments were established. It was not human government, Mosaic Law, or church councils that established the definition of marriage. God did it before any of those institutions came into existence.

> "But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then he Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave hisfather and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:20b-25).

The Lord established the formula for marriage just like he established the law of gravity or the axioms of physics. God ordained marriage as a lifelong covenant union between one man and one woman, and this is the only proper God-given arena for the exercise of sexual relations.

Dr. David Jeremiah, *People are asking…Is This The End? Signs of God's Providence in a Disturbing New World*,Turning Point, San Diego, California

Appendix E

50th Marriage Celebration
Tom and Sandy Baker, married 6/12/65

Many marriages would be better if the husband and the wife *clearly* understood that they are on the same side.

Zig Ziglar

Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.

Dr. Seuss

A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.

Mignon McLaughlin

We judge ourselves by our intentions. We judge our spouses by their actions. No wonder we think we're better!

Anne Moodie

A great marriage is not when the 'perfect' couple comes together. It's when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.

Dave Meurer

Let the wife make her husband glad to come home and let him make her sorry to see him leave.

Martin Luther

We are all a little weird and life's a little weird, and when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall in mutual weirdness and call it love.

Dr. Seuss

No man is truly married until he understands the words his wife is *NOT* saying.

Unknown

It's one of those cases where you may win the battle but lose the war. In marriage, it's either win/win or lose/lose. There is no win/lose. If you both don't win, you both lose.

Sheila Gregoire

Neglect the whole world rather than each other.

Krexy

Love is by definition focused on its object. If I'm thinking about me, I am not focused on loving my spouse.

Elspeth

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3

That one Philippian verse contains more wisdom than most marriage manuals combined. If heeded, it could virtually eliminate divorce from the catalog of human experience.

James Dobson

What you do everyday matters more than what you do once in a while.

Corey

Every man has to find out that his wife is cross—that is to say, sensitive to the point of madness: for every woman is mad by the masculine standard. But let him find out that she is mad while her madness is more worth considering than anyone else's sanity.

C. S. Lewis

The most important thing a father can do for his children
is to love their mother.

Henry Ward Beecher

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ, God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Your mate doesn't live by bread alone; he or she needs
to be "buttered" from time to time.

Zig Zigler

In marriage do thou be wise: prefer the person before money, virtue before
beauty, the mind before the body; then thou hast a wife, a friend,
a companion, a second self.

William Penn

Many a man has been lucky in marrying the woman he loves.
But he is luckier in loving the woman he marries.

G. K. Chesterton

List of Citations

Robert Browning Poem: *Grow Old with Me; the Best is Yet to Be!*

Chapter One – Before you Say, "I Do!"

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Gary Smalley Quote, Love is. . .

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Chapter Three – A God Created Marriage

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Chapter Four – Blending Differences to Create Strengths

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C. S. Lewis Quote, Need for a head . . .

Chapter Five – Eyes for You Only

Solomon Artistic Work

Artistic quotes from Song of Solomon

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Kay Author, Love Is . . .

Kristen Sauder, Energize Your Spouse, Former Retreat Presenter

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Afterward

Appendix

Appendix A: The Jewish Ketubah Marriage Contract, *The Women's Study Bible,* Thomas Nelson Publishers

Appendix B: Gary Chapman and Ramon Presson, 101 Conversation Starters for Couples

Appendix C: Chesterton on Marriage from de Silva's Compilation, Eric Schansberg Blog

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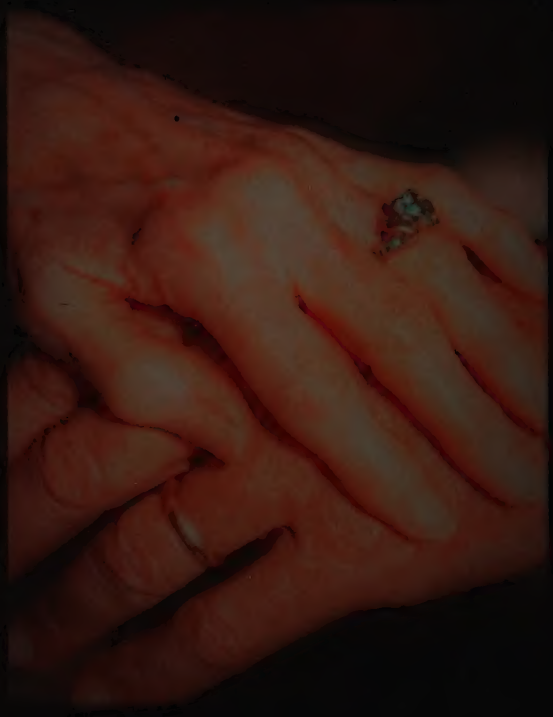
Appendix E: Baker 50th Anniversary, Gift Booklet Quotes



"Grow old
along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of Life,
for which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
who saith, 'A whole I planned,
youth shows but half' trust God:
see all, nor be afraid!"

Robert Browning
1812-1889
English Poet and Playwright